THE YOGA OF
MEDITATION



SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

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PREFACE

The Divine Life Society is happy to release this piece of an essential literature on the great art of the Yoga of Meditation. The first part of the book, consisting of an exposition of the Theory and Practice of Meditation in its fundamentals, appeared a few years back as a handy booklet, which is now here reproduced. This phase of the deep analysis and study presented in this book may be regarded as a sort of rock-bottom for all further thinking and study in the technique of Meditation.

The second part of the book appeared in a series through the columns of 'The Divine Life' journal of this Society and forms the lectures delivered by the author in the year 1976 at the Headquarters of the Society. This second phase of the book does, indeed, cover a large area in the field, and is mainly based on the science of Meditation as described in the Bhagavadgita.

The whole book, thus, will, we believe, be an indispensable companion to all seekers on the Inner Path, and enrich the lofty aspirations of people with its perennial value.

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THE YOGA OF MEDITATION

PART I

MEDITATION—ITS THEORY AND PRACTICE

THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

THE MEANING AND METHOD OF MEDITATION

The art of meditation is not a job to be performed as one does the duties of one's profession in life, for all activities of life are in the form of a function of one's individuality or personality which is to a large extent extraneous to one's nature, due to which there is a fatigue after work and there are times when one gets fed up with work, altogether. But meditation is not such a function and it differs from activities with which man is usually familiar. If sometimes one is tired of meditation, we have only to conclude one has only engaged oneself in another kind of activity, calling it meditation, while really it was not so.

We have to make a careful distinction between one's *being* and the *action* that proceeds from one's being. What sometimes fatigues the person is the latter and not the former. We may be tired of work, but we cannot be tired of our own selves. So it naturally follows that whenever we are tired of a work or a function, it is not part of our nature but extra-

neous to it. If meditation is also to become a work or a function of our being, it too would fall outside our nature. And one day we shall not only be tired of it but also be sick of it, since it would impose itself as a foreign element upon our being or nature, and it is the character of essential being to cast out every foreign body by various methods.

Aspirants on the spiritual path are generally conversant with the fact that meditation is the pinnacle of Yoga and the consummation of spiritual endeavour. But it is only a very few that really gain access into the centrality of its meaning and mostly its essentiality is missed in a confusion that is usually made by equating it with a kind of work or activity of the mind, which is precisely the reason why most people find it difficult to sit long in meditation and are overcome either by sleep or a general weariness of the psycho-physical system. It is curious that what one is aiming at as the goal of one's life should become the cause of fatigue, frustration and even disgust on occasions. People seek to know the secrets of meditation on account of dissatisfaction with the normal activities of life and detecting a lacuna in the value of earthly existence. And if even this remedy that is sought to fill this gap in life is to create a sense of another lacuna, shortcoming or dissatisfaction and if there should be factors which can press one into a sense of 'enough' even with meditation and make one turn to some other occupation as a diversion away from it, it has to be concluded that there is a serious defect in one's concept of meditation itself.

When we carefully and sympathetically investigate into meditation as a spiritual exercise, we come face to face with certain tremendous truths about Nature and life as a whole. Before engaging oneself in any task, a clear idea of it is necessary, lest one should make a mess of what one is supposed to do. The question that is fundamental is: 'How does one know that meditation is the remedy for the shortcomings of life'?

An answer to this question would necessitate a knowledge of what it is that one really lacks in life, due to which one turns to meditation for help. Broadly speaking, one's dissatisfaction is caused by a general feeling which comes upon one, after having lived through life for a sufficient number of years, that the desires of man seem to have no end; that the more are his possessions, the more also are his ambitions and cravings; that those who appear to be friends seem also to be capable of deserting one in crucial hours of life; that sense-objects entangle one in mechanical complexities rather than give relief from tension, anxiety and want; that one's longing for happiness exceeds all finitudes of concept and can never be made good by anything that the world contains, on account of the limitation brought about by one thing excluding another and the incapacity of one thing to include another in its structure; that the so-called pleasures of life appear to be a mere itching of nerves and a submission to involuntary urges and a slavery to instincts rather than the achievement of real freedom which is the one thing that man finally aspires for.

If these and such other things are the defects of life, how does one seek to rectify it by meditation? The defects seem to be really horrifying, more than what ordinary human mind can compass and contain. But, nevertheless, there rises a hope that meditation can set right these shortcomings and, if this hope has any significance or reality, the gamut of meditation should naturally extend beyond all limitations of human life. Truly, meditation should then be a universal work of the mind and not a simple private thinking in the closet of one's room or house. This aspect of the nature of meditation is outside the scope of the notion of it which many spiritual aspirants may be entertaining in their minds. An analysis of the nature of meditation opens up a deeper reality than is comprised in the usual psychological processes of the mind, such as thinking, feeling and understanding, and it really turns out to be a rousing of the *soul* of man instead of a mere functioning of the mind.

The soul does not rise into activity under normal conditions. Man is mostly, throughout his life, confined only to certain aspects of its manifestations when he thinks, understands, feels, wills, remembers, and so on. All this, no doubt, is a partial expression of the human individuality, but it is not in any way near to the upsurge of the soul. The difference between normal human functions and soul's activity is that in the former case, when one function is being performed the others are set aside, ignored or suppressed, so that men cannot do all things at the same time; but in the latter, the whole of man in his essentiality rises to the occasion and nothing of

him is excluded in this activity. Rarely does the soul act in human life, but when it does act even in a mild form or even in a distorted way, one forgets the whole world including the consciousness of one's own personality and enjoys a happiness which always remains incomparable. The mild manifestations of the soul through the channels of the human personality are seen in the ecstatic enthusiasms of art, particularly the fine arts, such as elevating music and the satisfaction derived through the appreciation of high genius in literature. In such appreciations one forgets oneself and becomes one with the object of appreciation. This is why art is capable of drawing the attention of man so powerfully and making him forget everything else for the time being. But in the daily life of an individual there are at least three occasions when the soul manifests itself externally and drowns one in incomparable joy; these are the satisfactions of (1) intense hunger, (2) sexual appetite and (3) sleep. In all these three instances, especially when the urges are very uncompromising, the totality of the being of a person acts, and here the logic of the intellect and the etiquettes of the world will be of no avail. The reason is simple: when the soul acts, even through the senses, mind and body, which are its distorted expressions, its pressure is irresistible, for the soul is the essence of the entire being and not merely of certain functional faculties of a person. While the joys of the manifestations of the partial aspects of the personality can be ignored or sacrificed for the sake of other insistent demands, there can be no such compromise when the soul presses itself forward into action.

The outcome of the above investigation is that when the soul normally acts, there is no consciousness of externality, not even of one's own personality, and hence the joy experienced then is transporting and enrapturing. And we have observed that meditation is the soul rising into action, not merely a function of the mind. This will explain also that meditation is a joy and cannot be a source of fatigue, tiresomeness, etc., when rightly practised. But meditation wholly differs from those channelised spatio-temporal manifestations of the soul, itemised in the above paragraphs. In meditation the soul's manifestation is not through the senses, mind and body, though its impact may be felt through any of these vestures before it fully reveals itself in the process called meditation.

The Sadhaka attempts to manifest the soul gradually in the meditational technique. The senses are bad media for the soul's manifestation, because the sensory activity is never a whole, one sense functioning differently from the other and being exclusive of the other, while the soul is inclusive of everything. Hence, when there is a sensory pressure from the soul it becomes a binding passion, almost a kind of madness, as it does not take into consideration the other aspects of life. The body, too, is not the proper medium for the soul's expression, for it is inert and is almost lifeless but for the vital energy or the Prana pervading through it. The only other medium through which the soul can reveal itself is the mind which, though it operates in terms of the information supplied by the senses, has also the capacity to organise and synthesise sensory

knowledge into a sort of wholeness, and, hence, is in a position to reflect the soul whose essential character is wholeness of being. Thus, the process of meditation has always to be through the mind though its intention is to transcend the mind. The mental activities, being midway between the operation of the senses and the soul's existence, partake of a double character, viz., attraction from objects outside and the longing for perfection from within. The more does the mind succeed in abstracting itself from sensory information in terms of objects, the more also is the success in meditation. For this purpose Śadhakas develop a series of techniques to draw the mind away from the objects of sense and direct it slowly to the wholeness of the soul. The main forms of this method, to put them serially, in an ascending order, would be (1) concentration on an external point, symbol, image or picture; (2) concentration on an internal point, symbol, image or picture; (3) concentration on universal existence.

An external point, symbol, image or picture is chosen for the purpose of concentration, so that the mind may not suddenly feel itself bereaved from sense-objects and yet be tied down to a single sense-object. Some seekers concentrate their minds on a point or a dot on a wall, a candle-flame, a flower, a picture of any endearing object or a concrete image of one's chosen deity of worship. All these have ultimately the same effect on the mind and help to collect the mental rays from the diversified objects into a single forceful ray focussed upon a given object. The intention of such concentration is to disentangle the mind from its involvement in the network of objects.

Every thought is a symptom of such an involvement since the thought is *of* an object and every object is related to every other object by similarity, comparison or contrast. Apart from this logical network of thought, a physical object is subtly related to other physical objects by means of invisible vibrations and hence the thought of an object is at the same time a stimulation of such vibrations which are in the end inseparable from the physical forms of the objects. Concentration on a given form breaks the thread of such relatedness to external things and the objective of such concentration is finally the separation of thought from the sense of externality, which is the essence of existence of an object. When thought is freed from the bondage of externality, it is at once freed also from the quality of *Rajas* or the force which presses it towards the object, as well as *Tamas* which is a negative reaction of Rajasic activity. By this means concentration leads to freedom from Rajas and Tamas, which is simultaneous with the rise of *Sattva* or transparency of consciousness as reflected through the mind. It is in the state of Sattva that the true being of all things, called the Atman, reveals itself as comprehending all existence, and as incomparable brilliance and joy.

Concentration on internal centres is also practised by Sadhakas according to their special predilections of temperament. The process of psychological freedom achieved is similar to the one in concentration on external points or forms, the only difference being that in internal concentration the objects are only forms of thought instead of physical locations or things. The idea of the 'external' and 'internal'

is really with reference to one's own physical body, so that it is more a procedure adopted for convenience rather than a system which has any ultimate objective significance. Whatever is concentrated upon externally may be regarded as a psychological image in internal concentration. One special feature which is discoverable only in internal concentration is that in this method one can conceive any form of reality to one's own liking, which may not have anything corresponding in the physical world, such as the ideas of all-comprehensiveness, togetherness, unity, harmony, supreme abundance and even such ideas as of Infinity, Eternity and Immortality. But the last mentioned three ideas actually transcend the idea of internality and open up the concept of the universal.

The idea of universality overcomes the barriers of externality and internality created by the mind with reference to the body and the personality and visualises all things, including one's own individuality, as organically related to one another in a wider completeness to which there are no such things as subject and object, or the seer and seen, which are the outcome of self-reference by each particular individual in contrast to other individuals and things. The universal is incapable of even imagination since thought is always subjective and externalises the object. Thus the concept of the universal should be regarded as almost an impossibility. But, for purpose of meditation, a conceptual universal may be presented before the mind through the mutual transference of meaning between the subject and object, which would result in three alternatives: (1) Every

subject is also an object to others, (2) every object is a subject to its own self, and (3) there is neither a subject nor object where there is mutual determination among parts of a whole. Every unit of existence may be conceived as a whole in itself, i.e., an organism, self-determined in every way. There can be many such organisms, smaller and bigger in a series, and the universe is the largest organism. To conceive it as it would conceive itself is to be able to think the universal. In meditation this technique would involve a little effort of thought and of the will to maintain awareness of a transcendence of the subject-object relation, in any of the ways suggested above. Since the bodily individuality as a psychophysical organism is maintained mostly by the tension obtaining between itself and others which it regards as objects, any procedure which will overcome or release this tension would be a welcome method of contemplating the universal. The seekers who belong to this last category should indeed be very rare and few in number, for this super-normal thinking is not given to everyone because of the habit of the mind to pin faith in sense-objects by isolating them from its own location. The Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita are replete with descriptions of this state of consciousness, wherein the multiformed universal is contemplated. Special mention may be made of the 3rd and the 4th chapters of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the 5th and 7th chapters of the Cchandogya Upanishad, the 11th chapter of the Bhagavadgita as also the description of the Absolute in its 13th chapter. This is the way of *Jnana*, pure knowledge or impersonal meditation.

The methods of meditation in *Bhakti* or love and devotion emphasise the personal form of God more than the impersonal and instead of the fixing of consciousness in its role as pure awareness, as in the path of knowledge, direct emotion as love to the form in which God manifests himself before the contemplative mind. The Vaishnava theology conceives God in a fivefold series of manifestations known as *Para* or the Supreme, *Vyuha* or the group, *Vibhava* or the incarnation, *Archa* or the symbol of worship and the *Antaryamin* or the indwelling. The Para is God conceived as the transcendent creator, whose nature is awe-inspiring, and his uplifted presence carries with it a feeling of inaccessibility and a grand remoteness from the dust of the earth. Vyuha is God conceived as a group of manifestations, known in Vaishnava scriptures as Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, corresponding almost to the mutual relationship of Brahman, Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat in the terminology of the Vedanta. Vibhava is God in an incarnation manifest in the planes of creation for redressing the sorrows of the denizens of the planes. Archa is the image or symbol used in external or internal worship, a limited form meant to help concentration of mind on God through a finite focus which gradually enlarges upon wider realities, stage by stage. Antaryamin is the counterpart of Para, God as the indwelling presence, not far removed from creation as the creator thereof, difficult to approach, but the very soul of creation, living within it and capable of vital contact in any speck of space or atom of creation.

The path of Bhakti also conceives methods of

concentration of mind by *Sravana* or the hearing the glories of God, *Kirtana* or singing his names, *Smarana* or remembrance of him, through Japa, etc., *Padasevana* or adoration of his feet in his manifestations or in his essential being, *Archana* or formal worship by ritualistic methods, *Vandana* or prayer offered to God, *Dasya* or the attitude of being a servant of God, *Sakhya* or the attitude of friendship towards God and, finally, *Atma-Nivedana* or self-surrender to God. These are various means of reaching the consummation of divine love by which the mind is fastened upon God's existence and all his associated attributes as omniscience, omnipotence, compassion, and the like.

The technique of concentration of mind in the *Yoga* system of Patanjali is concerned more with the volition aspect of the psychological organ than the understanding and feeling, as in Jnana and Bhakti. The will plays here the prominent role and concentration is the effort of the mind to fix its attention on the different degrees of reality, viz., (1) the physical universe of five elements in terms of the space-time relation and the relation of idea, name and form; (2) the five elements in themselves independent of these relations; (3) the inner formative principles of the five elements in terms of the space-time relation and the relation of idea, name and form; (4) the formative principles of the five elements independent of the relations; (5) the joy which follows from this concentration on transparent being; (6) pure Self-awareness that ensues thereby; (7) retention of the memory of the extermination of all mental forms in

the finest essence of Self-awareness and, lastly, (8) realisation of Pure Being as the Absolute.

A system of spiritual living known as *Karma-Yoga* rarely gets associated with meditation. But Karma-Yoga is really meditation in action and it is a Yoga by itself. It is, however, difficult for beginners in spiritual life to imagine how an action can also be a meditation, for action is usually associated with movement, physical or psychological, while meditation is regarded as attention in which all movement is checked. The action, which Karma Yoga is, differs from this usual definition of action as distinguished from concentration or attention of mind. An exposition of this method is mainly found in the Bhagavadgita where *expertness* in action is identified with *balance* in the attitude of consciousness. Yoga is not only supreme ability in the execution of perfected action but is at the same time stability of consciousness or equanimity of mind. The two aspects of this particular technique cannot be reconciled as long as action is limited to the personal activities proceeding from desire. Karma-Yoga is desireless action, which alone can be consistent with spiritual consciousness. The Self which is pure balance of existence is co-extensive with cosmic reality and can therefore be reconcilable with action when it is transformed into an impersonal process of spiritual being instead of a personal activity of individual desire. This concept of spiritualised action is an advanced step in Yoga and cannot be prescribed to novices who cannot imagine anything beyond their bodily personality. But once the spirit is grasped, a seeker moves unscathed in life, unaffected by likes and dislikes and contem-

plates divinity in all actions which he identifies with the processes of the universe. In lesser concepts of Karma-Yoga, it is defined as one's attitude to all activity as a form of the movement of the properties of the external Nature, of which one remains an unconcerned witness. It is also regarded as action performed in the spirit of service of God or even service of humanity and all living beings, the fruits of which the performer does not long for but offers up entirely to God.

In internal forms of meditation a special feature is a system known as *Kundalini-Yoga*. Here, the human system in its subtle make-up within is regarded as a microcosmic specimen of the universe and attempt is made to manipulate the powers of Nature by the regulation of forces within one's own individuality. The realms of the cosmos correspond to the centres in the individual, which are accepted to be seven in number. Concentration on these centres in the microcosm stimulates the forces lodged in the centres which bear an intimate relation to the relative centres in the macrocosm. Thus, meditation on these centres is tantamount to meditation on the reality of the cosmos. Enormous details on such meditations are laid down in a group of texts called Tantras, which enunciate methods of a gradual overstepping of the grosser forms of Nature through ritual, worship, recitation of formulae, regulation of breath and concentration of mind. Since some of the ways prescribed in the Tantras seem to take the seeker along the roads of sense-objects and the material Nature, though with a view to transcending them in spiritual experience, the danger of a set-back or fall for

the inexperienced and the unwary is more in this path than in the other methods of Yoga. The technique is very scientific but not entirely free from the fears of temptation and retrogression when attempted by unpurified minds.

All the procedures of meditation are, in the end, ways of awakening the Soul-consciousness which, in its depth, is, at once, God-consciousness. What is apparently extraneous and outside one's body gets vitally woven up into the fabric of one's being in rightly practised meditation. In brief, meditation is the art of uniting with Reality.

IMPEDIMENTS IN MEDITATION

The more we try to understand life, the more complicated does it appear and the more also does it try to elude our grasp. Human wisdom seems to be inadequate to the task of handling the situation in a world of unintelligible forces and strange facts which appear to strike hard upon the heart of man. Much of the difficulty is in understanding the structure of one's own personality which is composed of elements that do not always come within the ken of normal perception. The truth of the matter is that man lives in a world of forces and not persons and things. It is one thing to handle persons and things, and quite a different affair to deal with forces. For the human attitude towards a centre of force and what is named as a person or thing varies. It is naturally impossible to have emotions of love and hatred in regard to a centre of force which is intertwined with other such centres in the world. But one experiences a tumult of emotion in regard to

persons or things. This happens because of the differing modes in the evaluation of values. We see something in a person which we cannot see in a centre of force, just as a child sees something in a doll which an adult mind does not see there. The child has a special value attached to a doll, or, say, a motor car made of sugar. For the child it is real, while for a mature mind it is stupid something made of sugar. Here lies all the difference between the child and the adult. While the child sees the shape, the adult sees the substance. The child's value is in the shape and the colour, while the adult's value is in the essence thereof. The adult is amused at the child's evaluation of values because of there being no such thing as that which the child sees apart from what the adult sees.

Centres of energy impinge upon our personalities in a variety of ways. That particular centre of force which for the time being exhibits characters of a structure which happens to be at that time the exact counter-correlative of the structural pattern of the individuality of a person becomes an object of attraction and of love to that person and there is an emotional upheaval in the person in relation to that centre of force which is visualised as a localised object due to the limited capacity of visual perception in a human being. But when, in the course of the natural evolutionary process of everything, the structural patterns of these 'related' centres of force automatically undergo such change as to modify their entire form in a given space-time continuum, there is said to be what we call bereavement, loss of possession and a breaking of one's heart as a consequen-

ce. Sorrow to the human being seems to be unavoidable when he refuses to see things rightly due to his weddedness to the senses which cannot see what is beneath their own skin. The human eye cannot see what the X-ray or the microscope sees. Just as the baby's eye is incapable of a probe into the substance of the sugar-doll the human vision cannot have access into the internal structure of objects and mistakes them for solid bodies while they are in fact whirling centres of energy. The microscope would see our body differently from the way in which our own eyes see it. It is this mistake of the eyes that enables us to see value in things. Likewise, our other senses play mischief with us. The taste to the tongue, the odour to the nose, the sound to the ears and touch to the skin are really different psychological phenomena produced within our own system when the vibrations from different centres of universal energy impinge on our senses in different ways. This difference again is due to the difference in the structure of our senses. As the same electricity freezes things in a refrigerator, boils our tea in a stove and moves a train on the rails because of the difference in the structural media through which it is made to manifest itself, the universal energy is received as colour by the eyes, sound by the ears, odour by the nose, taste by the tongue and touch by the skin. The form of a body seen by us is the manner in which our total personality is able to react to a given centre of the universal energy.

When one attempts to enter the field of spiritual life, it is not enough if one merely tries to understand how to concentrate one's consciousness on one's

concept of reality, for, it is equally important to know the ways into which one can be easily side-tracked in this endeavour. The great opposition which the seeker has to face in his arduous pursuits comes from the reports of the senses. They begin to complain that they see beauty and meaning and have reasons to love multiformed things, while the investigative consciousness within argues that reality ought to be one. Thus it is that in spiritual meditations on one's chosen idea of reality, the senses set up a rebellion and compel the consciousness to pay attention to their affections. The senses seem to have no use with an attitude which cannot appreciate that there are localised objects which they can love with satisfaction.

The universal consciousness seems to get dissipated and lock itself up in whirling centres of force, which are our objects, and behold itself as if in a mirror where something is visible and yet no contact with it can, in fact, be established and, hence, it cannot also be possessed. Consciousness begins to see itself in the object by transferring itself to the latter and the object having thus assumed the position of the subject is loved as the self and caressed, and the subject gets transported into an ecstasy over the feeling of possession when there is the psychological contact with this object which has assumed the character of the subject. What is called worldly existence is this much: the dancing of the self to the tune of its desires and raging against all opposition to its fulfilment. The desire, in the long run, becomes not merely a psychological function but assumes a metaphysical character, hardening itself, as

it were, into an obstacle that cannot be easily overcome by an effort of consciousness. The desire for food and sex and the demands of the ego to be invested with power, recognition and glory are not merely a mental act which can be easily silenced but the heavy operation of the forces in which the consciousness has got entangled and which it begins to regard as self. Love is twofold: sensory and egoistic. In spiritual meditations, these desires become the dare-devils which work hard to defy the attempts of the spirit to realise its universal presence. The body-idea is at the root of all the trouble. It acts as a thick mist blurring the vision of consciousness which begins to perceive a difference where there is none. The psychological efforts of the seeker are powerless before these metaphysical forces, for it is not humanly possible to satisfy the idea that there is really an object before one's eyes. The object refuses to be called merely an idea and no one has ever succeeded in achieving freedom from love of objects, for love cannot be withdrawn from what is really there visible as a centre of meaning and attraction. Nor is it a joke to withhold one's anger upon forces which seem to obstruct the development and fulfilment of love. It is because of this operating system of the mind that spiritual effort has often failed even in monasteries and in meditation caves, and instances are abundant when whole-hearted seekers who dedicated themselves to meditation in seclusion for two or three decades have been stirred to sensory activities and egoistic adventures. No one should have the hardihood to imagine that one has mastered the spiritual techniques or overcome

desires in spite of several years of seclusion and meditation. The reason for the failure, in most cases, is erroneous meditation for years, involving the repression of desires rather than their sublimation. The objects have not vanished; they are still there ready to devour us with their tempting looks and they are there present hybernating even in a cave, a temple or a cloister. As long as we behold grandeur and value in the things of the world, in social positions and in power and self-respect, our meditations are likely to prove to be mere roamings in a fool's paradise. Unless we grapple with objects and transform their very nature and form into a spiritual constitution, we cannot be said to be really meditating on reality. A wave cannot resist the ocean. To achieve any success, it has to sink into the very ocean itself.

Weakness of will is partly the reason for failure in spiritual pursuits. Also, it so happens, unfortunately, that the time most people devote for meditation is too little in comparison with the extensive part of the day and night when the consciousness is vigorously in pursuit of pleasure. Whatever little benefit has accrued during the short period of meditation is likely to be swept away by the strong winds of desires during the larger part of the day. For, desires are not to be taken lightly. They have powers before which the most destructive bombs cannot stand. The celestials who send nymphs to stultify the meditations of Yogins are the subtler essences of the senses which are cosmically distributed in ethereal realms and which fly like jets towards their respective objects while the feeble ratiocinating

power of man keeps looking on with bewilderment and a sense of depression, a mood of melancholy and a feeling of the hopelessness of all human efforts in the end.

It is not that effort is useless, but ordinary efforts are inadequate. The celestial beauties descend into the mortal world to tempt the unwary aspirants by a constant presentation of variety in beauty and value. When the aspirant has mastered one form of resistance, he finds himself in the grip of another which is quite new to him. When he is busy with methods of overcoming this second front, he finds that he has fallen into the pool of a third group whose existence he could never notice before. One's life seems to be spent away in this manner in a perpetual struggle for conquering the sense of erroneous values, but life is too short even to be able to count the number of such values and sources of temptation and opposition. This has been the predicament of thousands of seekers both in the East and the West, and it is no wonder that Bhagavan Sri Krishna warns us in the Bhagavadgita: 'Among thousands of people, some single being attempts to achieve perfection; and even among those who strive, some rare soul it is that really attains it.'

The life of the spiritual seeker is one of a throng of miseries, losses and set-backs, which come one after another. It is like attempting to swim across the vast sea with the power of one's arms. Adepts have compared these difficulties to such formidable tasks as binding a wild elephant, swallowing fire, walking on a razor's edge or drying up the ocean with a blade of grass, and so on. These analogies

may be terrifying, but they are not very far from truth. No one has attained spiritual perfection by indulging in desires, for even a single act of sensual or egoistic indulgence may work like striking a match whose sparks are quite enough to set up a conflagration and burn up the accumulations of past effort. Stories such as those of sage Visvamitra, Parasara, etc., come to us as cautions on the way and may act as sign-posts or guiding lights, but we cannot learn by others' experience. Everyone has to tread the same path which others have trodden ages ago. Everyone has to undergo the same processes through which Visvamitra was disciplined, Saubhari was chastened, or Durvasa was confronted. The powers of the universe act equally upon all and exert the same pressure of intensity on one's meditation. The loves and hatreds of the heart are the longings of the total structure of one's individuality and are not merely functions of the conscious mind. It is the total being that leaps in joy when an object of love is near. Every cell of the body sends forth its love. Every nerve of the body vibrates in sympathy with the object. It is not merely the thinking mind that functions here. This is why love and hatred are difficult to conquer; they involve conquering of the urges of one's total personality which is up to jump over itself upon an object or objects. These subtleties of human life and spiritual adventure are not known to most seekers. Many have thought that spiritual life is just a matter of free choice and it is enough if one moves about with a single loin cloth, eats only once a day and sleeps for just two hours. While all these practices are good in themselves, they do

not touch even the fringe of the main problem on hand. It is here that many have cried out in despair that God alone has to help a seeker, and no mere effort would be of much avail.

The remedy for all this is meditation itself, for there is no other way. The laws of Nature seem to be such that one can neither live nor die happily. This difficulty is summed up in a single word, '*Samsara*'. The cure for Samsara is spiritual meditation, and it has a great many varieties of techniques which have to be employed with incisive carefulness. Nothing would appear to be happening when the meditation process is dull or when a blade of grass sweeps over a sleeping hand. It is only when an intruder seems to be arriving that the watch-dogs wake up to a violent activity and offer attack with all their might. The sensory beauty and personal grandeur which are all hidden within the resources of Nature get stirred up when meditation commences in right earnest.

The universe is something like a powerful radar system that is set up from all sides to record every action and every event that may take place anywhere, even of the least intensity or momentum. Meditation, when it is properly done, is not a silent and non-interfering process of thinking by some individual in some undisturbed corner, but a positive interference with the very structure of the universe and, sometimes, a directly employed system starts working at once and the forces around receive a warning, as it were, that someone is in a state of meditation. Immediately, counter-forces are gathered by what is generally known as the lower nature and

the meditation receives a set-back. The greatest obstacle in meditation arises from one's emotions, for human life is essentially a display of feelings. Forgotten memories get revived and they assume a life once again, creating a powerful disturbance and vehemently striving to bring back the worldly circumstances of love and hatred in the concentrated state of consciousness. It is here that desires which have once been suppressed get intensified and the occasional cravings of a dedicated one in spiritual pursuits can be worse than those seen even in the normal man of the world. For the rebuff that comes with a vengeance is always more vehement than the usual working of forces. Loves and hatreds are here magnified and even an ugly object looks beautiful. Silly things may assume great importance and even the least reaction from anyone may be looked upon with positive enmity. Imaginary fears crop up, which cannot be remedied by any available means, and attachments of a peculiar nature, sometimes difficult to understand, arise in one's heart. Well-to-do persons may steal a pencil or penknife in such a condition, an act which one would not do normally. Appetites become more virulent and hunger can become insatiable. Aspirants begin to develop affections in spite of themselves. To the starved emotions, everything appears beautiful and lovable. Attachments get formed to such things as a dog or a cat. The variety of the trouble is unthinkable.

Saints have reiterated that the primary oppositions to spiritual meditation come from the desires for fame, power, wealth and sex. The desire to earn good name is indeed quite natural. Censure is never

tolerated, for it is a condemnation of the ego. The love for power may also insinuate itself into the mind of a seeker, and one might be satisfied with exercising one's power over one's attendant or servant, when there is none else over whom it could be exercised. The desire for wealth does not always come as an ambition for vast riches, for desires are also shrewd in the ways of their working, as if they are aware that asking for too much would not succeed, and so they ask for small things which would easily be granted. Money, at least in small quantities, becomes a need, and there are obvious arguments in its favour. No desire presents itself without a good reason behind it. Every preference or wish looks rational and justified. But, mostly, the desire for sex, however, tops all others. This urge is said to die only when the person dies. In our scriptures we are told anecdotes of anchorites, and the primary weapon that was discharged against them by the celestials was the object of lust. This temptation can hardly be resisted. Not even the wisest of the Yogins is regarded as completely free from susceptibility to sexual amour. That one has already led a householder's life and then taken to a life of meditation guarantees no immunity from the further temptation of sex, for this desire is endless and it does not seem to get exhausted by constant use or be satisfied even with repeated enjoyment. Those who are not fully acquainted with this apparatus of the Tempter would indeed prove a miserable failure in their attempts, and suffer a defeat in their meditation.

In educated seekers, the ego may become over-

weening and vain due to which there may arise desire to show oneself off, or they may suddenly imagine that they have a mission to save the world from downfall. Many seekers have honestly felt that they are veritable *Avataras* (divine incarnations) and that their knowledge is matchless in the world. One may begin to feel that one is always in the right and will never go wrong, and here any advice or suggestion for an alternative gets resented. This is the dominance of the ego, to which aspirants can easily fall a prey.

A sense of an unknown fear often begins to grip the aspirant by the heart, the sources of which he cannot easily discover. It looks as if the earth itself gives way under his feet and everything in the world has left him to his fate. There is desire and it cannot be fulfilled. There is anguish which cannot be recompensed. Occasionally, there is anger which cannot be adequately expressed. There may come even fear of death as the last of all threats, and all effort would appear to have been in vain. Life would appear to be ending without one's achieving anything, except suffering. These are some of the horrid scenes which the seeker on the path of meditation may have to witness, and blessed indeed are those who come out successful through these dangerous precipices and pitfalls. Gautama, the Buddha, had undergone all the trials, but he was a man of a sterner stuff; he attained enlightenment in spite of these oppositions.

Excesses in the practice may cause physical illness, which can act as an impediment to progress. Overdoing of the practice may land one in dullness

and lassitude of mind. One may be given to doubt as to the efficacy of one's own method, at a certain stage. Remission of practice and slackening of meditation may result from a lengthened period of continued effort. A general torpidity of the whole system and a feeling of 'enough' with what has been done may set in. Desire may arise for small satisfactions which, when fulfilled, may assume large proportions. Lights and visions seen due to pressure upon the *Prana* may be mistaken for God-vision or mystical experience. At times, one misses the point of concentration which refuses to come before the mind's eye. And, even when it is gained, it appears to shake and never gets fixed steadily. Tremors of the body, moods of depression and disgust may appear and disturb the peace of one's mind.

The tumult of obstacles in meditation is there so long as thought has not entered *being,* but struggles to gain entry into it. The value-judgments of individualistic feelings and emotions do not easily depart but persist in viewing objects as fit to be acquired or avoided. The centres of force of which the universe consists still appear as concrete objects localised in space and attract one's attention. As long as meditation remains only a thinking of the mind, the usual difficulties on the way cannot be avoided. The great war takes place when thought touches the gateway of *being* and seeks access into it. The oppositions are the strong gate-keepers that guard entry into the Absolute.

One has to be cautious in dealing with the opposing forces. A direct frontal attack does not always succeed, for the enemies are equally powerful, if not

more equipped than the seeker's energies. The aspirant should never go to extremes on the spiritual path, but always follow the *golden mean* in consideration and judgment. Sometimes, a little satisfaction or relief from tension, kept under a strict watch or caution, of course, may be necessary when the mind and senses become turbulent and death seems to be the only thing inevitable. The Buddha, here again, is our example. Too much austerity almost killed his person and no benefit accrued to him thereby. Mild satisfactions, with a tremendous vigilance, may occasionally be advisable. All this has to be done with a superhuman understanding of the situation, for the usual ethics or morals of the world do not apply to the seeker in their mere letter. The ethics of spiritual life is a little at variance from that of the common public of the world. While the morals of the society may be stereotyped, descending unchanged from grandparents to grandchildren, the morals of spiritual life may shift their emphasis on different sides of the mysterious difficulties on the way. The famous verse of the Bhagavadgita on this subject speaks a truth for all times: "Yoga is not for one who enjoys too much, or for one who abstains from all enjoyment; nor for one who constantly sleeps, or one who keeps always awake. Yoga ends the pain of him who is moderate in enjoyment, recreation, work, sleep, as well as wakefulness." This golden *via media* is difficult to perceive, but can be seen with an immense subtlety of discriminating understanding. In all these endeavours, the personal guidance of an experienced Teacher or Adept is necessary.

The obstacles to meditation can be met by meditation alone, practised repeatedly with undaunted vigour. In meditation, thought and being coalesce and become one. This is the stage of intuition, where objects disclose their essential character and, giving up all their tactics of opposition and revolt which they resorted to earlier, they assume a friendly attitude, and the whole universe seems to be on one's beck and call. The denizens of the higher planes, themselves, begin to help the aspirant, instead of opposing him as they did before. Service starts flowing from all sides and joy supervenes in one's nature. Light begins to flash from every atom of space and time overcomes itself. Distance disappears between things and the far-off stars seem to be rolling under one's feet. All that is covetable or desirable presents itself in its real form as an eternal fact of which one can never be dispossessed. Infinity and eternity blend into pure existence. Friends and enemies meet and enter into one's bosom. The universe casts off its externality, objectivity, materiality and transiency and puts on its supreme form of absoluteness, spirituality, intelligence and delight. Immortality and death become the wings of a single experience and all judgments enter the very being of the Universal Judge. It is the beginning of a Universal Self-possession, where creation seems to seep into one's existence and, in a flash of consciousness, man achieves awareness that his entire nature, physical and intangible, is bound up with all life that throbs and pulsates everywhere. In the lofty reaches of spiritual experience, one becomes all-inclusive, and is included in all, cognises and realises everything. This

experience is supersensory, super-mental and super-intellectual, and here the personality tends to disintegrate and one feels like being swept into a sphere of vaster implications, plumbing abysmal depths, scaling dizzy heights, viewing vast vistas unknown on earth. There is a sensation of Power which affects every particle of one's nature, and one is bathed in the Light of indescribable brightness. There is an awareness of the interpenetration of all things, and one is simultaneously in all places. Every single detail is exactly known in its own place, and in its minute detail, in its relationship to the Whole. Everything becomes crystal-clear, light shines separately from each single point in space, not merely from some orb like the sun from somewhere in distance space. One becomes immortal.

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

The apparently inseparable connection of the body and, in fact, the whole of one's life, with the physical elements of creation gets gradually loosened when one progressively advances in meditation. The force of gravitation by which one is confined to the surface of the earth, the limitations of time in the form of the notions of past, present and future, and the loneliness one feels in a corner of unending space are the essence of mortal existence. These are hard ties and difficult knots to break, and often even the possibility of overstepping their limits is beyond one's imagination. But this is precisely what the science of meditation promises and, in the end, achieves. The achievement, however, may take a long time, as several stages of the ascent to Reality have to be passed through.

In the initial stages, visions of different lustrous things such as a crystal, smoke, stars, fire-flies, lamps, glittering eyes, shining gold and light of various precious jewels, arise. These are only hints of advancement in meditation. We are also told that there will be, first, internal perception of a bright star, then a mirror made of diamonds, then the disc of the full moon, then a disc of jewels, then the disc of the midday sun and, finally, a sphere of fire-flames,—all these coming to one's vision, one after another, in succession. It is also said that a dazzling white brilliance will be seen in the disc made visible, and a mountain of lustre flashes forth before the meditating consciousness. There can also be visions of sky filled with blue light, with dark green colour, and blood-red colour, a brilliant yellow, and ordinary yellow, respectively, at a distance of about four, six, eight, ten and twelve inches. Continued practice enables one to behold a sky which is qualityless. This further changes into a charming light of bright stars, then an expanse blazing with world-destroying fire. It then becomes consciousness-space. Finally, it assumes the form of space refulgent with millions of suns put together.

Sounds of various types are also heard in deep meditation of a high order. First, there is a tinkling sound; second, a more jingling sound; third, the sound of a bell; fourth, that of a conch; fifth, of stringed musical instruments; sixth, of cymbals; seventh, of the flute; eighth, of a large drum; ninth, of tabor; and lastly, tenth, of the rumbling of clouds. Other sounds such as of the roaring of the ocean, of a sprouting fountain, of kettle-drums, of the hum

of bees, etc. are also common. Celestial fragrances, celestial tastes and celestial touches of an extraordinary type come as strange experience in meditation. In the condition of the first sound being heard, a thrilling experience passes through one's body; in the second, a feeling comes of the limbs being torn from the body; in the third profuse perspiration is produced; in the fourth a feeling of shaking of the head; in the fifth a feeling of one's palate dropping from the mouth; in the sixth a sensation of ambrosial sweetness oozing from the location of the palate; in the seventh comes knowledge of secrets; in the eighth ability of celestial speech; in the ninth divine cognition, and in the tenth one becomes a veritable God-incarnate.

The existence of different realms or planes of consciousness is recorded in the texts on Yoga and spiritual philosophy, and the seeker has to pierce through these layers, with undaunted vigour of aspiration. It is not wholly true that 'man is the measure of things', for we are assured in the Upanishads that there are higher measures of being and these are successively more real and inclusive forms of life than the preceding layers in the series. To speak in the language of the Upanishads, (1) the lowest unit of human perfection and joy is the satisfaction of a king who is a healthy youth, robust, learned, cultured, good natured and powerful, to whom belong the entire riches of the globe. A person of these endowments is not usually seen in the world, but if there is one, he is the lowest unit of delight, which would mean that man is the lowest measure of conceivable perfection. Higher than this unit, says the

scripture, is (2) the jurisdiction of perfection and joy of that class of beings above and internal to man's earth-consciousness, which have been called the mortal *Gandharvas* (or Gandharvas by action). Higher than this category of beings are (3) the heavenly *Gandharvas*, (4) the manes or *Pitris*, (5) the celestials or *Devas* by action, (6) the celestials or *Devas* by birth, (7) the celestials or *Devas* in essence, (8) the ruler of the celestials, called *Indra*, (9) the sages such as *Brihaspati*, (10) the divine manifestations as Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, known in the Puranas as *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Siva*, (11) the Cosmic Form, known as *Virat*, each succeeding stage exceeding and transcending the earlier one a hundred times in knowledge, power and bliss. In fact, the *Virat* is not merely a mathematical multiplication of the lower experiences, but the Infinite stretching behind and beyond everything, which has no measure or equal with which it can be compared, either in quantity or quality. The Supreme Reality ranges beyond even the manifestation as the *Virat*, and it rises further higher as (12) *Hiranyagarbha* and (13) *Ishvara*, which are its more internal and inclusive cosmical extensions. The Eternal Being, which is the ultimate Goal of Yoga, is beyond these universal manifestation still, and it exists unrelated in its supremacy as (14) the Absolute, *Brahman*.

It is not that a Yogin has to take graduated steps through everyone of these stages, for the planes of consciousness from (2) to (10) enumerated above are regarded as mostly intermediary levels which may have to be traversed by souls that entertain certain corresponding desires within, and this is the

well-known passage of progressive unfoldment, which goes by the name of *Krama-Mukti* (gradual liberation), and which is detailed by means of quite a different terminology in the Cchandogya and Kaushitaki Upanishads. But this is not a uniform rule of ascent of every soul and in exceptional cases, the consciousness may suddenly rise from (1) to (11), directly, as a result of the intensity of rightly practised meditation of an impersonal nature. Even the stages (12) and (13) are not obligatory divisions in the experience that follows, and there is said to be a sublimation of consciousness, at once, from (11) to (14), since, in fact, the stages (12) and (13) are logical distinctions necessitated as the cosmic counterparts of the human states of consciousness and need not be taken to represent experiences necessarily incumbent on the seeking soul that has once reached the stage (11), the stages (11), (12) and (13) being ultimately indistinguishable from one another when one actually comes to their realisation. The many stages mentioned, nevertheless, indicate the difficulty of the ascent, as well as the extent of the progress that man has yet to make in his evolution. These are mysteries transcending human comprehension, and here our guides are only the scriptures and the teachings of the Masters of Yoga.

THE GROUNDWORK OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The equipments with which one has to arm oneself for entering into the field of meditation are no less important than the knowledge of the art of meditation itself. Many seekers with a fund of knowledge in them of the methods of meditation

often fail to achieve tangible success in their efforts due to their not being properly prepared for the task they have taken on hand. There is many a question and a problem which subconsciously, though not consciously, disturbs and agitates the mind, almost throughout the day and night of an individual, irrespective of one's position in society and the riches of which one may be possessed abundantly. The subtle anti-sympathetic vibrations set into action by anxieties and limitations of various kinds keep in suspense, if not harass, the mind constantly, in a state of cold war, as it were.

Here we have to bring into consideration one's external relationships in life, such as the political, social, economic, moral, aesthetic, biological, as well as religious predilections and restrictions apart from one's own psychological make-up in general. A person politically enslaved to the core, whether by the mechanism of the State or by ill-administered systems causing nervous tension, as it would be patent in many places of the world even today, is denied the natural freedom honestly due to a human being as his birthright, and this dead-weight of the external mechanistic set-up is sure to intensely tell upon those beginners in the science of thinking. There is no doubt that a certain amount of freedom from the shackles of a rigid and overweening form of political governance is an indispensable necessity and all geniuses and culturally advanced personages of any country or nation have been those who had freedom of thinking, speaking and willing and had achieved liberation from a purely mechanised giant of State control, due to the nation's or the country's

having risen above the law of the fish and the law of the jungle to the law of understanding and the law of a feeling of the significance and value and meaning of the individual in his own independent status, a status which he enjoys right from his birth, not because of the bounty or charity that he receives from others, individually or collectively, but because of what stuff he is made of in himself, an eternal spark and a flame of a longing for larger and larger growth and expansion, a light which cannot be extinguished even by the strongest gale of time's vicissitudes. A specimen of such a free State of liberated individuals as its flowering citizens has been, to the people of India, the ideal of *Rama-Rajya,* an ideal which is said to have historically materialised itself in ancient times, an ideal which is the fond dream and hope of every political thinker in India, nay, of every statesman of any nation. Political freedom may not have a direct bearing on spiritual meditations, but what bearing it has on the life of an individual, who is spirit, mind and body in one, should be too obvious to call for any explanation or exegesis.

Too much eagerness to reform others in society and the world at large without self-purification and a readiness of oneself to the task is to be regarded as a major obstacle in one's efforts for spiritual perfection. Subjective urges and yearnings are to be considered well before attempting to bring order in the objective environment. First an integrated personality through manifesting a proportion in the functions of the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and spiritual levels of one's being, has to be built up for achieving good and beneficial results in any di-

rection. To miss this point and lay stress only on external social harmony would be a serious mistake. Without Self-knowledge in an appreciable degree and a total comprehension of life, attempts at social planning are bound to fail and lead to conflict and confusion instead of the longed-for social peace and harmony.

Apart from this, man has his own social restrictions, the do's and don'ts of the community in which he is brought up, which are supposed to help and support, but which often hinder and obstruct, the growth of the individual into the higher expanses of mind and spirit. The limitations imposed on the life of a person, whether politically or socially, are intended to check the excesses in his thoughts, speeches and actions, his vagaries, extravagances, whims and fancies, as well as prejudices of various kinds, which, when given a free lease and a long rope, are likely to deprive others of their rights and needs or, sometimes, even ruin them totally. While this is the positive and healing aspect of outward control, it has its negative and deleterious side when it loses sight of the individual's good by a deification of the demand for his obedience and his subjection to the autocracy of what should otherwise be a directing and guiding principle in life. In the social life of India, particularly, there is what is known as the caste system, or the classification of people into social groups, necessitated by the need for cooperation among the specific endowments and capacities of people who have to lead a collective life for mutual good and improvement. But this very necessary provision for the ordering of groups in society can debar

certain persons from the very chance of improvement and growth when the groups which form integral parts of the organisation of the society get segregated into classes of competition rather than cooperation, leading to its natural further consequences of mutual dislike, conflict and strife in various intensities. This is the travesty and distortion of the social rule for the purpose of personal advantage though leading in the end to personal ruin of which one is not, in one's ignorance, usually conscious. It is the habit of the selfish personality to take advantage of any situation in which it is placed and twist it to its own ends and convert into a vice even a universally accepted and praiseworthy virtue. Persons who are caught up in such circumstances in society need a guiding hand and an enlightening word, and the socially inflicted one, like the politically enslaved, will find that a higher advance in the field of the inner life will be almost beyond one's reach. The State and society are largely responsible for the quality and number of individuals who can venture into and succeed in the endeavours for a spiritual advancement in meditation on higher realities.

It is also said that religion cannot be taught to hungry stomachs, a great truth with much meaning. Reality manifests itself in degrees and even the physical plane is a degree of its expansion. It is not that one can jump to the skies of the spirit, from the body that is lumbering on the earth, without adequate preparations. Food, clothing and shelter, the creature comforts of the human being, are at least in their minimum proportions, a necessity, and while

these are absolutely essential, one should have the opportunities to acquire them with a sense of freedom from attachment and anxiety. Too much of them causes attachment and too little anxiety. Hence beginners in the Yoga of meditation should strike a middle course of choosing a harmless and yet morally justifiable means of making their ends meet either by service of some kind or production in their own individual capacities, to the extent permissible and possible. Too high an idealism completely bereft of the realistic touch in it will be a stumbling block, leading to failure in the end, while, at the same time, too much concern for material comforts without the soaring idealism of spirituality will lead to a fall from one's aim. The *Madhyama Marga* or the middle path usually spoken of as the one chosen by the Buddha is a good example of avoiding extremes in any course of action and tuning the string dexterously to produce from it the most beautiful music of the harmony of life. This dexterousness is called *Kausala*, and the harmony is called *Samatva*, in the language of the Bhagavadgita,—two terms which have a wide connotation, applicable to all levels of life. The maintenance of the body in a perfectly healthy condition is a necessity, though the intention behind it is to transcend its demands and limitations, stage by stage, by self-restraint in a moderate manner, gradually practised.

Intimately connected with this aspect of the seeker's life is the moral aspect of his personal and social life. The economic needs of a person are generally linked up with the processes he employs in accepting material and intellectual provision from so-

ciety. In the case of the ordinary man of the world, his need is likely to become a greed which can slowly grow into an obsession and passion, sunk into which he becomes an exploiter and a hoarder, the principle being of taking more than giving. But, the policy of the spiritual seeker, even when he cannot rise above being an economic unit of human society, is not to take more than what he does give, because it is only in this way that he can avoid reactions from Nature, which are known as the nemesis of *Karma*. Nature always maintains a balance in all its levels and it cannot brook any interference with this law. Whoever meddles with Nature's law of balance, physically, mentally, morally or spiritually, will receive a rebuff from Nature, and this rebuff is man's suffering in life. It is maintained by moralists that the ideal rule of conduct is to treat others as ends-in-themselves instead of as means to ulterior ends, for no one would like to be treated as an instrument or a tool in bringing satisfaction to another. This is the chracter of one's being an end-in-itself and not a means, a character which discloses the truth that each one is an end and not a means and to treat everyone in this capacity is the essence of treating another as one's own Self, because one's own Self is an end-in-itself. This is also the reason behind the teaching: 'Do unto others as you would be done by', or, as the Mahabharata puts it: 'One should not mete out to others what is contrary to one's own Self.' This, then, is the great law of morality in the world, and this also is the way of extricating oneself from the clutches of the law of Karma. This is also the law of what is known as

Yajna or sacrifice, described in a most poetic and epic style in the *Purusha Sukta* of the Veda and the 3rd and 4th Chapters of the Bhagavadgita,—sacrifice in its cosmic and individual significances. Sacrifice is life, for sacrifice is cooperation, cooperation is harmony and harmony is a reflection of True Being.

A very pertinent but much neglected aspect of the spiritual search is the observance of strict continence in the mind and the senses. This discipline has been called *Brahmacharya,* an extremely subtle device to ensure the strength and growth of one's personality as well as the full flowering of life into a conscious realisation of the Supreme Spirit in one's practical life. Modern man with his dissipated energies has not the education or the time to give attention to this moral, vital and vulnerable part of his life which, when not guarded with great understanding and care, may ultimately mean his ruin in body, mind and soul. The desultory and morbid cravings of the human heart, which characterise modern society in general, tend to disintegrate the vital spirits of the personality, a reason for there being no peace either in oneself or in the family and society. Nothing can be considered more salutary and necessary than self-control, which is the meaning of Brahmacharya, to perpetuate human health and good-will, mutual participation in a common good cause and spiritual force and lustre in the entire human nature.

The law of sacrifice is at once the law of self-restraint whose canon is known as the *Yamas* in the

ethics of Yoga. Yama or self-restraint is a process of self-subdual, a restraint of the passions in the form of lust, greed, hatred and anger and a non-acceptance of possessions more than one actually needs for the maintenance of one's psycho-physical individuality. This is the subject dealt in great detail by the scriptures on Yoga. And this is a pre-eminent rule in the life of a student who wishes to achieve any success in meditation. The law of treating others as ends-in-themselves is sufficient explanation of what *Yama* or self-restraint means in the life of a progressing aspirant on the spiritual path.

Heat and cold, hunger and thirst, and sleep are biological pressures and needs which cannot be easily overlooked, and 'the devil has to be paid its due'. Here again, excess or shortage is undesirable and the rule of moderation here to be followed is well stated in the 6th chapter of the Bhagavadgita. Neither luxury nor starvation is to be the principle to be adopted. The rule again is the maintenance of a balance of attitude and attention to the degree of reality in which one finds oneself at any given moment of life. The hedonistic urges and aesthetic sense, which should be usually regarded as normal to human nature, are often debarred by ascetic teachers of spirituality from having anything to do with spiritual life or even the good life. But, here, again, the criterion is the finding out of the stage in which the mind of the seeker is, and it is this standared that can judge whether something is necessary or not. It is not always easy for oneself to judge one's needs, for one can easily go to excesses or do a wrong reading of oneself due to a clouded

understanding or, very often, due to personal weaknesses or partiality in favour of oneself. Arts, such as sculpture, painting and music are not bad in themselves and they can very well become channels of sublimation and elevation of emotion when properly handled, at least in the earlier stages of the spiritual ascent. Too much of rigorism is bad, and this is a rule in anything, and, we should say, as bad as too much of slackness. It is easy to glut or starve oneself, but not so easy to eat moderately; easy to be talking always or not to talk at all, but not easy to speak moderate words. The urges of the aesthetic sense can also be expressed usefully through literary pursuits. Intensive reading of spiritual poetry or philosophical prose, a perusal of sublime portions and instructive passages from Shakespeare or Milton, from Valmiki or Vyasa, is indeed paying even to a seeker of Truth.

Seekers are sometimes apathetic towards their body, the 'brother ass', as saint Francis of Assisi used to call it. Nevertheless, it is a good beast of burden, and if it is not to be there, who is to bear the burden of life? Living in extreme cold without proper clothing, eating carelessly and cutting down of sleep to the extreme may damage one's health, instead of helping to achieve the end of spiritual enlightenment for which these austerities are embarked upon as means. In all these adventures of the higher life, direct instruction from a *Guru* or teacher is necessary. No student can regard himself to be so advanced as not to need any instruction or guidance at all. Humility is the hall-mark of even those who are about to stumble into the ocean of

Reality. There is no harm in effacing oneself. The danger is only in self-affirmation.

The religious atmosphere in which one is brought up from one's childhood gives a strong colour to one's feelings, naturally. The Hindu, Buddhist and Jain; the Christian, Muslim, and the like, all are obviously brought up under the influence of special and peculiar religious notions which bear an impact upon their personal and social life. They have their own modes of rituals, fasts and observances, each one of which has an element of good in it and can be pursued with advantage when taken as an honest means of self-purification and self-evolution. But differences in religious ideologies should never interfere with the spiritual universality of human aspiration. This is a basic truth which most religionists are likely to forget. Religions which preach the oneness of God and the brotherhood of humanity are also not infrequently sponsors and protagonists of religious wars, and this is the extent to which fanaticism can go, a total misrepresentation of that which is to lift man to the cosmic spiritual ideal. Religious rituals are a great help in *Sadhana,* and faiths in religious customs are good palliatives of human emotion. But these act also as double-edged swords, which can cut both the ways when brandished by untrained hands. Religious rituals have also an aesthetic value; they are an art in themselves, like sculpture or painting. But, what the seeker has to avoid vigilantly is bigotry or fanaticism in any of his pursuits or attitudes.

Study of spiritual texts is a great help as a pre-

paration for the meditational attitude. The Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita, the Sermon on the Mount from the New Testament, the Dhammapada, and similar apt selections from the religious lore of the different religions may be taken as text-books for daily *Svadhyaya* or sacred study. Such a study is an aid in giving freedom to the mind within the delimited ambit of sublime thoughts recorded in these scriptures. In fact this is a kind of meditation itself, generally speaking. *Japa* or repeated recitation of a *Mantra* or formula, a concept or an idea, is again a direct aid to meditation. Japa of a Mantra, regularly performed daily, stirs new unknown powers in oneself. Those of the novices in the practice who cannot take exclusively to meditation should resort alternately, or in a circle, to Japa, study and meditation, so that the mind may not be tired of monotony in the practice. The study and the chantings may be loud, mellow or silent as the case may be, in accordance with the constitution and psychological needs of the student concerned. A particular method called *Kirtana* and *Bhajana*, which is a mode of musical recitation and singing of divine Names as well as the glories of God in various ways, is exceedingly helpful as a method in purifying and sublimating emotion and lifting it to an ardent devotion to God. This is precisely the method of *Bhakti Yoga* or the Yoga of Divine Devotion.

The location or the habitat of the student of Yoga intending to practise meditation should be as far as possible isolated from the places of noise and hectic activity such as cities, factories, business centres, etc. This is something which is too clear

a prerequisite to need any explanatory comment. The Svetasvatara Upanishad and the Bhagavadgita have said something very salient and to the point in respect of choosing the place and atmosphere for meditation. Peaks of mountains, sides of vast reservoirs of waters, mellifluous expanses of breezy scenery are all regarded as conducive to evoking a meditative mood in the aspirant. Holy places of pilgrimage sanctified by the presence of saints and sages, past and present, atmospheres of ancient temples and churches and places of religious adoration contribute to the rise of sublime feelings in a Sadhaka.

Prayer and worship act as suitable preliminaries to concentration of mind. These have various forms such as the *Puja* in Hinduism, the *Mass* in Christianity and the *Namaz* in Islam. Every religious faith has its own form of prayer and worship, which is an outward form of an inner feeling of dedication of oneself to the Divine Ideal. While prayer is a personal and private exposing of oneself wholly to the inflow of Divine Grace, a secret surrender of the soul to the glory and greatness of the Almighty, worship is an external gesture in acts and symbols of this inner dedication of self. *Karma* or sanctified works and duties, *Upasana* or holy worship and contemplation and *Jnana* or wisdom of God are regarded as stages in the spiritual ascent to the Supreme Realisation.

A word of caution may be added here in regard to the proportion that is to be maintained in the pursuit of the aims of human existence, called the *Puru-*

sharthas,—Dharma, Artha, Kama and *Moksha,—* and the practice of the four Yogas,—*Karma, Bhakti, Yoga* and *Jnana.* Spiritual aspirants are prone to lay emphasis excessively on Moksha or the Final Salvation, among the Purusharthas, to the exclusion and even detriment of the other three, viz., Dharma or the moral rule, Artha or economic value and Kama or emotional satisfaction. An over-emphasis here is deleterious to the integral growth of the individual towards perfection. What evolves spiritually is the *whole person* and not merely a side, an aspect or faculty of the individual. Too much stress on the Moksha aspect of spiritual life often makes one careless towards the values of the world, which not infrequently take a revenge upon the seeker when they detect a proper opportunity in his life. A balanced moral sense, as long as one lives in the world, a sense which should apply not only to others but also to one's own personality, a due sense of values to one's real material needs, a careful participation in the joys of life and a proportionate deep yearning for union with God should be well blended, not as a composite fabric, but a homogeneous compound of a well-balanced life of divinised humanity. A similar care has to be taken in proportioning one's attitude in respect of the four Yogas which represent the disciplining of the conative, emotional, volitional, and rational aspects of human nature. Undue emphasis on one or a few alone among these will set up similar unpleasant reactions. As the growth of the plant of life through the *Purusharthas* has to be harmonious, so is the tending of it through the four *Yogas* into the vigorous tree of life to be balanced and propor-

tioned, so that it may yield the precious fruit of God-vision and perfection in the Absolute.

THE PROBLEM OF SELF-ALIENATION

Meditation is a self-integrating process throughout, from the beginning to the end, and hence any form of self-alienation is opposed to and becomes a hindrance in meditation. Modern man is so much a self-alienated personality that it has become a part of his nature, even as one who has been continuously ill may mistake that illness itself for a normal condition of his body. Every step in meditation is an effort to overcome the barriers to self-expansion and a deepening of one's personality within.

It may be wondered as to what self-alienation is, which is so much opposed to meditation. It is a state of mind in which one takes a falsified personality of oneself for one's true personality and labours day and night for the fulfilment of the urges of this falsely imposed personality. It is this misconception regarding oneself that is the cause of the many forms of one's painful life, of sense and ego-indulgence, all which come upon oneself as a reaction to a disbalanced personality. Psychological alienations are of many kinds: (*a*) In these days, it is hard for people to create or nurture an intrinsic worth in themselves, living as they do in an atmosphere of artificially fabricated external values. To cite an example, there appears to be a great value in a person when he is possessed of enormous wealth or is stationed in a highly powerful office of admini-

stration; but he becomes a 'nobody' overnight, when he loses his wealth or is dispossessed of his office. This feeling of 'emptiness' in himself now is because he had no worth in himself except that which was foisted on him externally by the values which are supposed to be associated with wealth and authority. He lived in a money-self or power-self rather than his own real self. This is an instance of alienation from one's own self. (*b*) There may be difficulty, again, caused by opposition from the opposite sex, which mostly ends in a transference of values of the true self to a form of it temporarily visualised in the object of sex; this vision being sheerly a blinded one, not being able to see through the truth behind the form of attraction. In this condition of mind, there is self-alienation, the self moves as it were to the object, investing itself over it, due to which it is that the object is loved as the self. For the time being the self has become the object here, a state in which the mind is in a heightened form of restlessness. (c) There can be alienation of self from people around oneself, caused by the inability of oneself to accept, abide by or follow social customs or the manners and traditions of society. This can also come about on account of a high opinion which one has of oneself, with a contempt for others in society. Here, again, the mind is restless and cannot find peace in life due to self-isolation from other people and the credit which should go to them as human beings. Attachment to one's own group and the simultaneous hatred for others due to conflicts of interest, which may be sociological, ethical or political, communal bifurcations created by caste,

creed and colour, or such differences as of North and South, East and West, etc., among human beings, as also too much emphasis on artificially made social stratifications as high and low, sweep into the entire personality and create a difference where it is not, a difference and conflict creating self-alienation from fact or reality. (*d*) An improper use of one's position in society is also a cause of self-alienation. This is a state of affairs well-known in political fields, and in offices, big and small. This is a highly undesirable and unhealthy situation which enters into one's mind and makes it perpetually sick, creating at the same time a notion under which it can easily be mistaken for health, power and the performance of duty. (*e*) Another pernicious and unhappy condition in modern society is the extracting of labour from the poor without adequate recompense for the work taken from them. While labour is necessary, work is good and cooperation with the machinery of social and political government is unavoidable for the mutual welfare of all people, it is also to be borne in mind that work cannot be taken without due regard being paid to it and in the absence of a due reward or price for the labour that is purchased. In fact, when labour is honestly and morally requisitioned, it becomes a *Yajna* or sacrifice with a high spiritual import and ceases to be any more a sale or purchase of man-power as it is done in modern society. When the spirit of sacrifice is substituted by the mechanical device of extraction and extortion by exploitation in any manner whatsoever, it becomes a source of unhealthy fear, pricking of conscience and mental rest-

lessness both in the labourer and the laboured-for. This psychological condition is a self-alienation of another type altogether. Opposite of this is the opportunity given to each individual to grow into a healthy manifestation of his or her own integrating 'potential', 'to live and let live', for the purpose of an inward evolution into a proper acquisition of physical, mental, moral and spiritual health. (*f*) There is also a much higher alienation of self which is almost the cause of every trouble in life, viz., self-alienation from Nature as a whole. Though it is true that we live on earth and have contact with water, fire, air and ether, it would be realised on a scientific analysis of the situation that these are really not contacts but rather repulsions of cellular, nervous and psychological reactions to impulses from Nature, which we call sensory perception of the existence and operation of Nature. Contact is always a union and not reaction to stimuli. We are thus living like exiles in Nature, not being able to be really friendly with it, a fact which is daily corroborated by the experiences of heat, cold, hunger, thirst and a constant fear of physical destruction of one's bodily personality. (*g*) The last and the greatest aberration is the separation of the self from God. This is something difficult to explain, but a greater calamity cannot befall man than this to have happened. This is really the isolation of one's entire personality and individuality from one's own Higher Self. This is what is known as 'metaphysical evil' in philosophical parlance, far worse than all psychological aberrations known to humanity. This is veritably to live in the realm of death,—'*Mrityuloka*'.

as the scriptures put it, to be in a state of constant dying, as the Buddha proclaimed in his great discovery.

METHOD OF SELF-INTEGRATION

These are the central problems of mankind and these are also the problems of one who seeks a universal remedy for all human suffering, who wishes to contact reality in all its degrees and live rather than suffer life in this world, which is otherwise a bounty and abundance. This is really a world of mutual amity, a world of brotherly cooperation, a world of psychological concord, a world of spiritual unity among all its contents, sentient as well as insentient. The world appears to be otherwise due to the aberrations detailed above. Meditation cuts at the root of these aberrations in every level and one who is successful in meditation is a universal man, a citizen of all the worlds. To achieve success in such a meditation is indeed to solve a large question. It is necessary, at the outset, for one to seek a meaning in the world which is outwardly chaotic and to recognise a pattern and purpose in creation as a whole, which, otherwise, for a casual look, appears to be just heavenly bodies scattered higgledy-piggledy in space with no organic unity anywhere. The world appears to be purely mechanistic in the Newtonian sense of the term, or rather in the modern materialistic sense. This outward view of the world which is taken as the final explanation of things is today threatening to convert man into a beast, when people are ready to fly at the throats of each other, seeing no sanctity in human life, nothing sacred

anywhere in the world. This is a glaring error which is brought into relief by the daily miseries of mankind one sees today in a world bereft of all spiritual values. The power of love is giving way to the authority of hatred. And, today, if there is no world war, it is not because people love each other, but because they hate and fear each other equally. All this is because life seems to have no meaning other than a hunting game for catching prey in the night of human ignorance.

The historical process, as philosophers of history would amply certify, is not an account of dates, kings and wars, but a study of human values and life's significances, as thinkers like Hegel in the West, for instance, attempted to explain through a much broader vision of things than the ordinary man of the street can hope to entertain. There is ultimately a great rationality behind history, a meaning which is at once sociological, economic, political, moral, religious and spiritual. All the laws that operate in any section of society are really invested with a meaning beyond themselves; everything is a process of the higher discovering itself in the lower, a veritable self-discovery.

A remedial process should be a keenly psychological technique of avoiding excesses in everything, steering clear of stress on one's life, both personally and socially, taking a whole view of things, as far as possible, when one has to face life daily, and to adopt a system of the Yoga of meditation as a panacea for human ills. But man wishes to forget himself when he is worried and when he is in pain,

rather than discover himself, which would have been the proper thing to do. People usually try to drown their worries in large noises such as of the radio, in stirring and stimulating sights, such as of the cinema, and hope to fill the emptiness of their lives with hectic activity, money-making, power-mongering, increasing the speed of life, searching for constant excitement of the senses, drinks and drugs. By these means, one becomes a stranger to one's own self and lives a most pitiable sort of life of an agony of nerves and of mind, difficult to explain in language.

No meaning can be sought in life by fleeing from oneself, but rather by turning towards the true self which is in everyone. This is the art of self-discovery. This is the way of meditation.

SELF-WITHDRAWAL AND SELF-DISCOVERY

The problem on hand is a very serious one and calls for a great concentration of mind and tenacity of practice. We do not propose to discuss here the purely personal, the biological, economic, social and political aspects of human self-alienation, which are a different subject by itself, but would enter straight into the main problem of man's alienation from Nature and God, which is the crux of the whole matter, the cause of every suffering conceivable, and an ultimate answer to all questions. And it is this final solution that a student of meditation seeks in his practical life of an entire adjustment of himself with reality.

There is an intense psychological analysis made in the philosophy of Buddhism, and systematised

later on, in a different way, by the sage Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras. The world we live in, according to Buddhist psychology, is *Kama-Loka,* or the world of desire, in which the *Kama-Chitta* or the desireful mind operates, like a hungry tiger prowling in a dense forest. This is not so easy to understand as it appears on the surface, for the *Kama-Loka* is different from the world which the scientist sees, for example, with his subtle instruments. *Kama-Loka* is the private picture which each individual mind projects upon the screen of the scientific world or the world of true forms, known as *Rupa-Loka.* There is a meaning that is read by an individual into everything that is of the world of forms. This meaning is *Kama* or desire. An object is beautiful or ugly, good or bad, 'mine' or 'not-mine'. Such evaluations and understandings of the mind in regard to the object-forms are its own desires or *Kama.* This would prove that we live in the world of desire rather than the world of true forms, for we cannot imagine an object to be entirely free from these personal evaluations mentioned.

The scientific world, on the other hand, is neither 'mine' nor 'not-mine', neither beautiful nor ugly, neither good nor bad, for in this realm of true forms or *Rupa-Loka* objects exist by themselves, independent of evaluations by others. The mind which perceives these true forms behind the projected pictures of desire is *Rupa-Chitta.* The first step in meditation would be to withdraw consciousness as *Kama-Chitta* from the *Kama-Loka* and raise it to *Rupa-Chitta* of *Rupa-Loka.* This is tantamount to viewing things in their own nature, objectively, without foist-

ing upon them one's own subjective wishes. This is one of the most difficult things to perform in meditation, for no one, ordinarily, can visualise anything independent of one's opinion about it. But, nevertheless, this has to be done. In Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutras*, the corresponding realm for *Kama-Loka* is of what he calls *Klishta-Kleshas* or painful afflictions in the form of ignorance of truth (*Avidya*), self-affirmation (*Asmita*), love and hate (*Raga-Dvesha*), and clinging to bodily life (*Abhinivesa*). The world of true forms in Patanjali is that of *Aklishta-Kleshas* or painless afflictions of the mind, such as normal perception and cognition (*Pramana*), erroneous perception and cognition (*Viparyaya*), doubt (*Vikalpa*), memory (*Smriti*) and sleep (*Nidra*). These are psychological functions independent of the wishes of the individual, hence impersonal in a way, corresponding to *Rupa-Chitta* or the mind perceiving the true forms of things. In short, to function in the *Rupa-Loka* would be to think as an object would think of itself, irrespective of any idea of it by a subject. This is something like raising oneself to the Kantian world of quantity, quality, relation and modality, independent of personal passions and prejudices.

But behind the *Rupa-Loka* is the subtler world of object-potentials, or *Arupa-Loka*. In the language of the Vedanta, this may be compared to the world of *Tanmatras* perceived by *Arupa-Chitta* or the subtle formless mind operating in that realm. This realm is unthinkable by the normal mind and is reached by the practical process of meditation in which the consciousness is withdrawn from *Rupa-Loka* to *Arupa-Loka*. But there is a transcendental mental

realm or *Lokottara,* where the *Lokottara-Chitta* or the transcendental mind operates almost abolishing the distinction between mind and its objects, where one borders upon the cosmic mind which has no objects outside itself. These four stages may be taken to correspond to Patanjali's gradation of *Savitarka, Nirvitarka, Savichara* and *Nirvichara* stages of Samadhi.

The methods prescribed to rise from *Kama-Loka* to *Rupa-Loka* are: (a) inhibition of bodily and mental functions by *Asana, Pranayama* and *Pratyahara;* (b) concentration on one selected object without thinking of another, by *Dharana;* (c) replacement of the object by a mental image of it; (d) divesting the image of all concrete sensations and conceiving the image in an abstract mental cognition with all the individualised characters of the image. It is here that *Rupa-Jnana* or the lowest form of super-normal perception dawns.

There are five stages of *Rupa-Dhyana* or meditation on the true forms of things, viz., (a) removal of stupor by reasoning or *Vitarka;* (b) removal of doubt by discrimination or *Vichara;* (c) removal of aversion by compassion or *Karuna;* (d) removal of distraction or worry by contentment or *Mudita;* (e) removal of sensuous desire by one-pointedness or *Ekagrata.* The emphasis in the method of Patanjali is on concentrating gradually on more and more subtle objects, while in the Buddhistic method stress is laid on greater and greater elimination of objective consciousness.

There are four stages of *Arupa-Dhyana* or meditation on the subtle essences of things (we may say *Tanmatras*): (a) In the first stage the mind transcends the consciousness of matter and form, of distinctions and limitations, and gets concentrated on the idea of infinite space. This infinite perception brings joy to the mind, for here space-perception is freed from the usual concrete empirical perception of it and raised to a non-empirical abstract concept. (b) In the second stage, the mind transcends the concept of infinite space and is concentrated on the concept of infinite awareness; it is merely aware of a concept of consciousness as infinite. (c) In the third stage the conditions of the 2nd stage are overcome and the mind gets concentrated on the infinite void and is aware of the void alone. (d) In the fourth stage, the lower stages are transcended and the mind rises to a state where there is no knowing, or non-knowing, but an inexplicable awareness, which is pure and simple.

Beyond this is the realm of *Lokottara-Chitta*, which no one can describe, for here the mind assumes the state of Cosmic Being and is one with the forms of all cosmic processes.

According to Patanjali, the lowest stage of mental concentration is known as *Savitarka*, wherein the mind in concentration becomes one with the gross object (*Sthula Artha*) associated with its name (*Sabda*) and concept (*Jnana*). The second stage is of *Nirvitarka*, in which the mind gets united with the gross object as free from name and concept. It is not the object that becomes known by the con-

sciousness here, but the consciousness freed from the sense of 'I' and 'mine' gets identified with the object. There is no 'I-ness' or 'this-ness' in regard to the subject or object, but the two become one and there is only the consciousness of the object in a state of union. The third stage is of *Savichara,* wherein the mind in concentration becomes one with the subtle object, like atoms and forces or Tanmatras etc., coupled with the ideas of space, time and causality and connected with the several attributes and relations. The fourth stage is of *Nirvichara,* wherein the mind in concentration becomes one with the subtle object, like the forces behind things, Tanmatras in their essences, free from the notions of space, time and causality and free from all attributes and conditioning relations. The fifth stage is of *Sananda,* where the mind in deep determinate concentration becomes one with the joy of *Sattva,* by the subjugation of *Rajas* and *Tamas,* though the latter are not completely destroyed here. The sixth stage is of *Sasmita,* wherein the mind in deep determinate concentration becomes one with the pure universal intellect or *Mahat* which is almost indistinguishable from the Universal Self. Here *Rajas* and *Tamas* are completely overcome and *Sattva* shines in its full splendour and glory. With a distinction of determinate and indeterminate meditation in the *Sananda* and *Sasmita* stages, the total steps to be covered become eight in number.

All these are the stages of what Patanjali calls *Samprajnata* or the objectively conscious condition in various stages of subtlety of being, tending to universality. Beyond all these is *Asamprajnata* or the

non-objective absolute state of being which is attained by supreme dispassion, resulting in the stoppage of all mental functions, leaving, however, the impressions of their cessation.

Transcendent to everything, there is the *Nirbija-Satta* or the seedless Absolute Existence, without even these impressions mentioned above. Here, the Goal of life is reached.

PART II

THE YOGA OF THE BHAGAVADGITA

It is proposed to place before all seekers, the main principles that underlie the gospel of the Bhagavadgita in its aspect of practice or the Yoga of Meditation. It is well-known to everyone that this celestial gospel, the Divine Song of the Lord, is a message that is communicated to mankind as a whole; and it is much more than merely a historical occurrence in the context of the Mahabharata, as most people would regard it to be.

The Bahgavadgita has a multi-faceted significance. It is a social message, a political gospel; it is a historical narrative, an epic of the greatest conceivable magnificence and also the enunciation of a spiritual principle and the most valuable instruction on the way of life in general that can be applied equally without exception to every human being. It is as difficult to understand the true meaning of the Gita as it is problematic to comprehend the many-sided personality of Bhagavan Sri Krishna Himself. It has often been said that the best commentary on the Gita is the life of Sri Krishna, and not any printed book that is available to us today. The idea behind this view about the Bhagavadgita gospel is

that it touches every type of being that is in the universe and puts its finger on every kind of problem that is conceivable; and it is a solution to all troubles, whether they are caused by external factors or engendered by internal causes. The difficulty of comprehending the meaning of this gospel is, therefore, very simple. It is a message of the Almighty to humanity. It is not an individual speaking to another individual. It is not Krishna, as a person, speaking to Arjuna, as an individual, at a time remote in historical time. It is principally a message to the aspiring spirit, the soul of man, the 'Jiva' that struggles to regain its lost dignity. It is a description of the path that leads from the earth to the Supreme Absolute. It is a detailed account of the various vicissitudes and transformations that one has to pass through and undergo in one's attempt to rise from the relative to the Eternal Being. It is a beautiful, artistic presentation of the many-sided attempts that the soul of man endeavours to forge in its struggle to grasp the goal of life at every step of its ascent.

The point that has to be underlined in this context of the gospel of the Bhagavadgita is that it is a message for every stage of life, for every step that we take, even the least and the most initial of steps in our attempt to rise higher, so that it cannot be said that it is a religious message, or a Hindu gospel, that it is a Yogic scripture of India, that it is applicable only to a certain section of mankind, a type of people or orders of life etc. It is a message to you, to me, to everyone, under every condition, in every circumstance, at every stage of life,

right from the lowest to the highest conceivable,—the goal of human aspiration.

With this little introduction in connection with the meaning of the message of the Gita, may I propose to dilate upon what would be the central teaching of this great message of the Supreme Master, Bhagavan Sri Krishna, to the seeking soul. It is, to put it precisely in one sentence, 'the message of the practice of the presence of God in the life of an individual'. It is a message of practice, how we have to conduct ourselves in our daily life with relevance to our relationship to the Ultimate Reality. This is perhaps the gist and the quintessential essence of the Gita's message. While it is a gospel of Yoga, the practice of spiritual life in general, it is a comprehensive artistic touch that is given by the many-sided personality of Bhagavan Sri Krishna to this unique way of approach, which may be called the science of life. The religious individual, the 'Sadhaka', the renunciate, the spiritual seeker, is likely to misconstrue the significance of the presence of God in practical life by an over-enthusiastic approach to the idealistic concept of God's existence, which, due to this fundamental error, is likely to bifurcate God from the practical life of the ordinary individual in the world.

The life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, as I mentioned, is the best commentary on the Bhagavadgita, an explanation of its true meaning. If you would like to know what the message of the Gita is, you have to know what the way of life was which Sri Krishna followed in his day-to-day conduct and programme.

Can you call him a Sannyasin? Can you regard him as a Yogin? Can you say he was a warrior? Can you call him a householder? What can you imagine about his personality? Was he a worldly-wise man, or an absorbed, totally withdrawn spirit, contemplating the transcendental Absolute, unconcerned with the turmoil of practical life? What would be your view about this peculiar enigmatic character of the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna? That, then, is the message of the Bhagavadgita. Sri Krishna lived what he taught, and taught what he lived. There was no gulf between his teaching and his life. The intention for us is that we are supposed to approximate our life to that life which he lived ideally as an example before us. It may be that, to us, this ideal would appear as a remote one, but it is, again, the teaching of the Gita that this so-called remote ideal of perfection which was demonstrated in the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna is to be brought down to the level of the lowest conceivable individualistic practical life, and reconciled with it in a blend and harmony.

It is the beauty of the gospel of the Gita that it can come down to the level of the lowest from the pedestal of the highest perfection without losing the vitality of that perfected state. This coming down of the supreme perfected being to the level or the status of the lower does not involve a diminution in the divinity of that perfection that one has attained. This is the beauty and this is the difficulty, too, in understanding this beauty. Generally, when an elevated personality steps down to a lower level, it is usually regarded to be a demotion, a coming-down

of the very value of the person, but here the peculiarity and the beauty is that the significance, the value, the worth or the comprehensiveness, the power of this perfection does not get diminished even a whit, though it appears to have descended to the lowest of levels.

One can well imagine how breath-taking it is to conceive this meaning that seems to be hidden behind the teaching of the Gita. Perhaps, many may imagine, 'this is not meant for us'; 'not for me'; 'my mind is not trained to think like this'; 'I have not been educated in this fashion'; 'my learning is inadequate to the purpose'; 'what I have studied appears to be out of point altogether if this is going to be your interpretation of the Bhagavadgita and your reading of the meaning behind the life of Sri Krishna'. But this is the grandeur and this also is the practicability of the message. While this message is the most transcendent and the most difficult to conceive, it is at once the easiest and the most practicable of all things. While it is the breath-taking grandeur of the Supreme Perfection of the Absolute that is behind the gospel of the Gita, it is also the most motherly, tender and homely teaching which can be understood and appreciated and applied to even a child in its own level. There is something in the Gita which is beneficial to everyone. The Gita has something to give to every being;—the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, man and woman, learned and the illiterate. Whatever be the condition of a person, that person has something to receive from Sri Krishna; that person has something to get from the Gita, and

there is some aspect of solace which one can hope to have from this all-comprehensive ocean, which is the real 'Ratnakara', God has bestowed upon us.

But there is another interesting aspect in this message which I would like to point out here; an aspect which is beautifully stated in an advice given by Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra in the context of the Udyoga-Parva of the Mahabharata, wherein we are told that on the eve of the coming of Sri Krishna to the court of the Kauravas for the purpose of the peace mission, Dhritarashtra calls Sanjaya and says: "I am told that Krishna is coming tomorrow. I do not know why he is coming and what we can do for him, and what he expects from us. What kind of person is he and what best can we do to satisfy him? Will you kindly give me an idea of what he is, why he is coming? Can I see him?" Sanjaya, having given a practically long sermon to Dhritarashtra on the necessity of establishing peace with the Pandavas, and avoiding the imminence of a war, states briefly, "You want to see Krishna. I am surprised that you make this statement before me".

Nakritatma kritatmanam jatu vidyat Janardanam. "O king, the 'Kritatman', that is Bhagavan Sri Krishna, cannot be beheld by any 'akritatman'. This is all that I can tell you. No one can see a 'Kritatman' unless he himself is a 'Kritatman'!" What does he mean by 'Kritatman'? In the second half of this verse, we are told what 'Kritatmata' means.

Atmanas tu kriyopayo nanyatrendriyanigrahat. "Self-control is the hallmark of 'Kritatmata'. An

uncontrolled being cannot behold this controlled being that is Krishna. King! This is all that I can tell you as an answer to the query you have put before me". "Here is a principle that speaks loudly the perfection indicated by 'Atmavinigraha' or self-control. Sri Krishna is the visible embodiment of self-control. You see in him, with your physical eyes, in colour and shape and contour, what self-control is. That is Sri Krishna. He is an incarnation, veritably, before us, of 'Atmavinigraha', self-control, and no one who has not controlled his self can see him".

Such a being is behind this gospel and in a sense we may say that the teaching of the Gita is a teaching on 'Atmavinigraha', 'Atmasamyama', or the restraint of the self in its various ascending degrees and stages. It is a gospel of the control of the self for the purpose of the realisation of the Self. It would look strange indeed that in order to experience the Self, we have to control the self first. Does it not look like a contradiction, an enigma? While our aim is the realisation of the Self and experience of the Self; and the purpose is the entering into the very being of the Self, becoming one with It, the way to it is supposed to be the restraint of the self! "What is one to mean by this contradiction in the teaching? Am I to control the very thing that I want to realise? Is it expected of me that I have to restrain with the reins of my mind and put a check upon that very thing into which I want to enter and which is supposed to be the goal of my existence and aspiration? What is the meaning? How can one try to control that which one is aspir-

ing after?" 'Atmasakshatkara', Self-realisation, is the goal, and 'Atmavinigraha', self-restraint, is the means. This is what the Bhagavadgita would tell us, a point which it elucidates beautifully in the sixth chapter particularly, and in certain other places, too.

It is difficult indeed to grasp the meaning of this so-called contradictory placement of values, that 'Atmavinigraha' is the pre-condition of 'Atmasakshatkara'. But the difficulty vanishes like mist before the sun if we are to understand what this Atman, or Self, is, what we really mean by the Self that we are supposed to restrain and to realise.

The Atman which is to be controlled and the Atman which is to be realised are not two different Atmans. It is one and the same Atman or Self that is to be restrained in one of its aspects and is to be realised in another of its aspects. What, then, is the peculiar side of the Atman which is to be checked, put down under 'vinigraha' which is supposed to be the means, and which actually is what we call the practice of Yoga?

The practice of Yoga is the same as 'Atma-samyama', or self-control. While Yoga is defined as union or the coming together of the essence of one with the essence of another, it also means all the prerequisites and the preconditions necessary for the achievement of this purpose. So, Yoga is both the means and the end. It is the means that we adopt as well as the goal that we reach. Both these are defined by a single term, 'Yoga'.

While Yoga means union, let us leave aside for the time being the question of the definition of what this union means. While it means 'union', it also means 'withdrawal'. To use two significant terms of the Bhagavadgita itself, we may say that the Yoga of the Bhagavadgita is 'Vairagya' and 'Abhyasa' put together in a beautiful blend. These two terms occur in the Gita itself, in the Sixth Chapter. 'Vairagya' and 'Abhyasa' constitute the Yoga of the Gita, and it is a little delicate to use the word 'and' between the two terms, because they are not two different things as water-tight compartments. They are two facets of the same crystal of the practice or, we may say, they are like the obverse and reverse of the same coin. At one stroke, instantaneously, we are supposed to be capable of practising 'Vairagya' and 'Abhyasa', not that we have to do 'Vairagya' today and 'Abhyasa' tomorrow. There is not even the difference of the least time duration between the one practice and the other. They are simultaneous, and we have to be an expert in bringing about this real Yoga, or union, of 'Vairagya' and 'Abhyasa' in our practical day-to-day life. At every moment of life we must be experts, adepts, and adroit in 'Abhyasa' as well as 'Vairagya'. We have to be withdrawn and we have to be, at the same time, concentrated. This is the meaning of the practice of 'non-attachment' and 'steadfastness' as the principle behind this Yoga of the Bhagavadgita. It means that we have to be very vigilant. We cannot be wool-gathering at any time. The Yogis, even those who are only aspiring to tread this path, cannot afford to forget the importance of this requirement. One has always to be

cautious. 'Pramada' or forgetfulness, or weakness, is regarded as a great error, a blunder indeed, in this great journey of the soul to its perfection. So, expertness in the art bringing together 'Vairagya' and 'Abhyasa' is a necessity, something unavoidable. And, sometimes, the Gita tells us that this expertness in the conducting of oneself in life is itself Yoga: *Yogah karmasu kausalam.* It is the capacity that you exhibit in your day-to-day life, to tune yourself to every condition, that is Yoga; because every condition is a timeless occurrence, from the point of view of the message of the Gita.

While we appear to be living in time, in a succession of instances of duration, we are perpetually in contact with a timeless meaning that is hidden behind this duration of the time process in which we seem to be involved. We are never cut off from the vitality of the timeless, so that we cannot say that we are out of touch with the presence of God at any time, even in our lowest of levels, even in a fallen condition. There is no such thing as falling from God. It cannot be.

The practice of this 'Atma-samyama-yoga,' which is the meaning of the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, is, therefore, conditioned by certain disciplinary processes which will make one fit to become expert in the blending together of 'Vairagya' and 'Abhyasa'. At the very commencing admonition of the Chapter we are given a succinct definition of this pre-condition, this necessary discipline that has to be the practice.

Yam samnyasamiti prahur
yogam tam viddhi pandava,
Na hyasamnyastasamkalpo
yogi bhavati kaschana.

Samnyasa is defined here as the relinquishment of an attitude of the will or the psychological organism within. It is something very difficult to grasp, again. Samnyasa is described in the Bhagavadgita in a novel fashion, something about which many would not have thought properly. You would not have bestowed sufficient thought on this aspect of the definition of Samnyasa. 'Sankalpa-tyaga' is regarded as Samnyasa, which means the renunciation of the usual habit of the desireful will of the individual, and a harnessing of this potency of the will towards the practice is 'Abhyasa'. This is called Yoga. The withholding of the flow of the current of the will in the direction of multitudes of perfections by which the energy of the individual is dissipated and the harnessing of this energy that is so conserved for the purpose of the practice of meditation is the essence of the Yoga of the Bhagavadgita.

So you have to perform a double feat at the same time,—the withdrawal of your personality, the controlling of your will, the renunciation of the creative habit of the psychological organ, and the tuning of this controlled energy thus acquired for the purpose of concentrating one's total being on the totality which is the goal,or the aim of Yoga. This is the deep philosophical meaning of this verse referred to above. No Yoga is possible where the separatist will is allowed to affirm itself as an isolated reality.

And the Chapter goes on in a little detail, giving us some more information about how we can actually try to make ourselves fit in our daily life for this unique practice. This has been stated in some of the following verses of the very same Chapter,—perhaps the immediately succeeding one tells us something very meaningful:

Arurukshor muner yogam
karma karanam uchyate,
Yogarudhasya tasyai'va
samah karanam uchyate.

There is, generally, a feeling, even among advanced seekers on the path of the life spiritual, that, evidently there is a vast difference between the life of withdrawal and the life of activity in the world, an attitude which is the primary cause behind the unfortunate problems that face mankind today,—the problem of a conflict, as it were, between religion and social life, which is the very thing that the Bhagavadgita tries to solve, the problem which it wishes to break through completely. In this verse cited there is a clue to the meaning of this technique:

At the outset, when you are starting, when you commence this great Yoga of *spiritual living,* which is the Yoga of *living in general,* action is supposed to be the means,—*'karma karanam uchyate';*—and when you ascend higher and reach an advanced or particularly accentuated state, serenity is supposed to be the means,—*'samah karanam uchyate'.*

These words—'samah' and 'karma',—serenity and activity, have been variously commented upon and

interpreted by different authors, as if they mean two contradictory things altogether, as if the Gita is going to tell you that the higher state is bereft of the principle of action. But this is precisely what the Gita would refute. The Gita gives us various definitions of 'karma', and while it rises from the lower to the higher stages in a beautiful gamut of ascent, it does not disregard the significant values of any lower stage, so that it would be proper to hold that the Yoga of the Bhagavadgita is a growth of personality into the various degrees of perfection, rather than an attempt which would involve a rejection of any significant meaning in life or an abandonment of any truly existing value. It is, to an extent, like the growth of an individual from childhood to the adult condition, where the growth does not imply loss of personality or abandonment of any value that is worth the while, but is an absorption of values in a higher meaning, so that at every higher level, one is a gainer and not a loser. Thus, at every stage of this practice, call it 'karma', or 'sama', whatever be the word you may use to signify its meaning, you are going to rise to a higher level of greater comprehensiveness and inclusiveness wherein all living values of the lower stages are sublimated in a quintessential essence.

Let the fear go from the minds of people that the approach to God may mean a loss of the values or the pleasures of life. Though, intellectually, you may say, 'Yes, we understand this,' the heart has a reason which reason does not know. Your heart revolts against this intellectual conviction and rational deduction that the approach to God does not

mean any loss of values. The heart tells you: 'My dear friend, you are going to lose something,' and, therefore, there is a reluctance on the part of even a sincere person to tread the path of God in its real meaning; and one cannot avoid being a little bit of a hypocrite in one's inner personality, even in the presence of this most high Divine Being, the All-pervading Omniscience. The heart does not really want God, fully. This has to be accepted by every-one who is honest and sincere. Wanting God implies a special attitude which we are not prepared to adopt, because of a wrong notion of the very meaning of God, a tradition into which we have been introduced from our childhood, in spite of the repeated hammering by saints and sages that God is all-pervading and is the All. 'May be He is all-pervading, I know it very well. He is here under my very nose.' 'I accept it, but my heart tells me another thing, my sub-conscious weeps behind the veils at the very name of God, because it has a subtle suspicion that the bliss of God does not include the pleasures of life'. 'If this is so, I have to think thrice before I take the step,' retorts the mind.

The Bhagavadgita tells us, "Friend, the bliss of God does not exclude the pleasures of life; though the bliss of God is totally different in kind from all that you can regard as the pleasures of life. Everything that is worthwhile in life is included here, and if you think that the pleasures of life are also worth-while, they too are included there, but not in the way you conceive of the pleasures. The distortion and the error that is involved in what you call the pleasures of life is eliminated from the perfection

that is the bliss of God. Would you like to carry some error and distortion also in your life, into the goal that you are aspiring for? Would you like perfection or distortion?"

The pleasures of life, whatever be the degree of these pleasures, are a drop of the Divine Bliss involved in a complete distortion of meaning, which aspect the Yoga tries to eliminate so that the purity of the bliss is retained and the divinity aspect present in it is brought to relief. The aspect of divinity and perfection present even in the worst of things becomes a means to the rise of the soul to its great goal, and it is this that makes one see beauty and happiness even in ugliness and pain.

So, I may again iterate that the gospel of the Bhagavadgita, or you may say the gospel of meditation, or the gospel of life spiritual, is an all-comprehensive parental teaching, a mother's advice and a father's comfort, which gives you everything that you need, which provides you with the necessities of every stage of your life, every level of your personality and every aspect of your requirement. God, being all-comprehensive and present everywhere, offers to you every necessity, wherever you are, and whatever you feel like lacking in you, and what you consider from the bottom of your heart as the values of life. In God, everything is everywhere at every time, and God is All-Being.

It was pointed out that for the seeker who is attempting to climb the ladder of Yoga, 'action' is the means; and for one who is established in Yoga, 'serenity' is the means: *"Arurukshor muner yogam*

karma karanam uchyate; Yogarudhasya tasyai'va samah karanam uchyate." This precise and pithy statement in a single verse has been interpreted almost by every expounder of the Bhagavadgita, as implying a difference, if not a contradiction, between one type of means and the other mentioned here,—'action' is the means, and 'serenity' is the means.

Generally speaking, we cannot bring together action and serenity on one platform, because our way of thinking is such that action appears to be the opposite of serenity. There is a disturbance caused by a manifestation in the form of activity of any kind, and therefore, the term 'serenity', used in the Gita, has been regarded as a stage which is equivalent to withdrawal from action and not compatible with action in any manner. Also, there is another aspect of this interpretation. What is action which is supposed to be the means for the beginner and from which one is supposed to withdraw according to this interpretation in the application of the second means? We cannot think of activity except in terms of the physical body; and also, an activity is associated with movement of the physical body. So action has somehow come to mean, by tradition, a movement of the organism of the physical system, and inasmuch as every movement is caused by a motive, a sense of want or lack, a feeling for the realisation of an ideal that is yet remote, it has been taken for granted that the causative factor of every action is indicative of absence of serenity in the mind. This is the reason why the expounders of the Gita have thought that serenity is different from action, and *samah* (serenity) is not the same as *karma* (action). Also, it is

an accepted feeling of the teachers of the gospel, as we have today, that serenity is higher in the quality of achievement than the state of action in which one is involved. So there is always a struggle on the part of the seeker to withdraw from activity, under the impression that every activity connotes a lower stage and the higher one is characterised by absence of activity, which is serenity.

If this is to be taken as the standard meaning of this verse, if on the basis of this interpretation, 'samah' or serenity is to be considered as absence of activity, Bhagavan Sri Krishna cannot be regarded as a Yogin. He would not be a 'Yoga-Arudha,' because he was bristling with activity throughout his life; and we cannot say that he was lacking in movement of any kind. It was all movement and dynamism from top to bottom. So, considering the life of Sri Krishna himself, at least, who has been acclaimed as the 'Supreme Yogeshvara', or Master of Yoga, we have to bestow a second thought upon the meaning of this verse and try to find out if there is a hidden significance behind these terms, 'action' and 'serenity', which are held to be the means of the different stages of Yoga.

We, as normal human beings, living in society, have a particular notion of action into which we are born and through which we are bred up. We cannot conceive of activity or action except in terms of movement and, as I stated, we cannot think of movement except in terms of the physical body; and so, we are obliged to interpret action as a kind of succession of position of a particular event or an object.

Every activity, according to our way of thinking, is a procession in time, a change of location, a transformation in condition, implying a sort of momentary application of concentration on the part of the one that is involved in this process.

We have been always told that the 'Yoga-Arudha', or one established in Yoga, is a personality who is identified with absolute fixity. This is a very subtle point which always misses our attenion in our attempt to understand the meaning of fixity, serenity or composure; and the difficulty is in the understanding of the difference that exists between the character of *sattva* and *tamas*. In *tamas* there is fixity, stability, an absence of movement or activity of every kind; and in *sattva*, which is the opposite of *tamas*, there is another kind of fixity, a stability which can be mistaken for the same kind of fixity as characterised by *tamas*, but totally different from it in quality. To give you a homely example: if an electric fan moves in a slow speed, you can see its movement. The wings of the fan are seen moving, but if the rapidity of the movement increases to a high pitch and there is tremendous movement of the wings of the fan, you will not be able to see the motion at all. It will appear as if the fan is not moving. It is fixed. The appearance of a total absence of activity on the part of the fan may be really the highest type of activity in which it is engaged. If you want to know whether the fan is moving or not, you have only to thrust your finger through it (or beware, put a thin stick through), though you cannot see its movement because of the intensity of the rapidity of its movement. So, a

visual perception of movement is not always the criterion of the judgment of the nature of action. There can be movement and yet it may not be perceived. As a matter of fact, perceived action is a low category of action. It is not heightened activity.

Now there is a third aspect of this point apart from the two already mentioned. Activity does not necessarily mean movement of the physical body, though this is the way in which we usually understand the meaning of activity. From the point of view of the gospel of the Bhagavadgita, from the standpoint of the ideal of spiritual life, the meaning of action is something different from what we associate with ordinary activity. There can be intense activity even if the physical body is stable. A stabilised physical body can engage itself in a different kind of activity by which it can move even mountains. This is a strange kind of action altogether, different from what you know and what you can imagine. The great events of the world are caused and motivated by forces which are not necessarily physical. It is not the physical activity of any individual or any particular physical object or body that is the cause behind great transformations that take place through history. There are other meanings hidden behind visual activity and these are generally called the forces of the world which control the destiny of mankind as a whole. The forces behind the visible activity of physical nature and human society are not physical, necessarily. They are something different from physical bodies and physical actions, because they cannot be contacted by physical means. A high frequency of motion can

transcend the realm of physicality, and may be impervious to the entry of physical instruments, incapable of perception by physical organs and yet more powerful than any physical instrument that you can think of. A stage may be arrived where physicality may completely drop out altogether and the forces may assume a new shape absolutely, in which condition it is difficult to call them physical. Even the discoveries of modern science have almost led themselves to this conclusion. The so-called physical matter of materialism, of crass material perception, the physical objects of nature which are tangible to the senses, have gradually evaporated into a substance which is really substanceless, which is absolutely incapable of physical contact, which cannot be observed even by the subtlest of instruments through a laboratory, and far subtler than even atoms as they can be conceived.

Matter has been de-materialised for reasons difficult for the mind to comprehend, and matter has become something quite different from what it is, and what it has been taken to be. It has ceased to be an object in the sense of any perceivable content; and it appears to have withdrawn itself into a different realm of being which is inseparable from subjectivity rather than the realm of objects. This is just to cite an instance of modern discovery. The physical particles of nature, the objects that we see with our eyes and contact through our senses are associated with activity, generally speaking; and we cannot think of action except in terms of these physical objects. But, what could be the character of an action, or an activity, or a movement in a

condition where physicality appears to have disappeared altogether and objects seem to enter into the structure of one another, mutually, where we cannot make a sharp distinction between one thing and another thing, as in the case of the waves in an ocean, for instance. One wave enters into the bosom and the structure and the bowels of the other. You do not know where one ends and the other begins. If forces of the world are to act in this manner and put on this shape in their activity, if one is not capable of existing without reference to the other, what would be your definition of action?

Now, I would draw your attention back to the illustration I gave of the movement of an electric fan where intense activity can appear to be absence of activity, rather the highest activity may look like no activity at all. The difficulty in understanding this point, which does not occur before our eyes and is not a phenomenon usually observed in human society, makes it also difficult to understand the meaning of the verse which mentions two different means in the practice of Yoga,—action on the one hand, and serenity on the other. It may be safely said that this verse of the Bhagavadgita which speaks of 'karma' and 'samah', action and serenity, does not speak of a contradiction between two types of means, but rather a difference between a lower state and the higher state, the higher state always being inclusive of the lower, as we had occasion to note earlier. The higher cannot be said to be different from the lower in any manner, whatsoever, inasmuch as the vitality and the values of the lower are always contained in the higher, just as we cannot

say that an adult who has grown out of babyhood is in any way different from the baby merely because adult-stage is different from the child-stage; for the values that are associated with childhood are transcended in the adult's state and not lost. So the higher means applied in Yoga is not a contradiction of the lower means but an absorption of the lower in the higher, an inclusion of the lower in the higher, a sublimation of the lower in the higher, so that instead of there being a contrast or a difference between one means and the other, there is a continuous growth and persistence of uniformity between what we usually call the lower and the higher. Here we come to the vital point of issue that is brought out as a significance in this verse we are studying.

The difference that is struck here between 'karma' and 'samah' is, therefore, something quite other than what we understand to be a difference between one thing and another thing. There is no question of inferiority or superiority here. It is an absorption of a lower means in a higher means, again to reiterate, the lower being included in every respect in the higher. Also the higher, when it is said to include the lower, cannot exclude the meaning of action, that which is signified by action, because action or 'karma', which is supposed to be a lower stage of means, if it is to be included in the higher, naturally, cannot lose its sense when it becomes the higher. So, the higher stage which is regarded as serenity or 'samah' is not absence of activity but a heightened form of activity, something quite superior to the ordinary type of action which is of low frequency, just as we cannot see

with our physical eyes the high frequency light-waves,—alpha, beta, gamma, cosmic rays, etc. about which we hear of these days. There are high frequency waves of light whose very existence is not known to us because of their being not capable of perception through the eyes or sensation by the senses. What we call sunlight, the most brilliant form of light we can think of, is a low frequency light which is capable of being caught by the retina of the eyes because of the frequency of the light-waves of the sun being commensurate with the capacity of the retina of the eyes. If it had risen to a higher state of frequency, we would see darkness everywhere. The whole of the world, then, would be as pitch, not because there is no light but because the light has become so intense that it is blinding, and the eyes cannot know that the light exists at all.

We are told in the Mahabharata, again, in the Udyoga-Parva, when Bhagavan Sri Krishna assumed the Cosmic Form and shone like brilliant suns, thousands in number, people closed their eyes as the whole phenomenon was dazzling to such an extent that what they saw was darkness. If you gaze at the sun for some time, you will see only darkness before the eyes; you will not see the light, because the eyes will be blinded by the glare of the sun; not because there is no light, but because you cannot perceive the light. Our incapacity to comprehend the meaning of a higher type of dynamism is the reason behind this water-tight compartment that people have struck between 'action' and 'serenity' in their commentaries on the Bhagavadgita on verses of this kind.

There is a fight which is going on from time immemorial between 'jnana' and 'karma', knowledge and action, life in the world and the life of *Sannyasa*, the life of activity and the life of withdrawal to serenity, which is a phenomenon come out as the outcome of incapacity on the part of the human mind to grasp the truth of the whole situation. There is no such thing as withdrawal really speaking from what is there really. "The real cannot not be, and the unreal cannot be."

If a thing is really there, we cannot withdraw ourselves from it. If it is not there, from what are we withdrawing ourselves? We cannot withdraw ourselves from that which is not there, nor can we withdraw ourselves from that which is there, because we have already said it is there; it is real, and the real cannot become the unreal. So the question of withdrawal or renunciation of action about which people speak so much, loses its sting when we try to understand what 'karma' or action is, and what 'samah', or serenity is. It is not a withdrawal in the ordinary physical sense of the term. Serenity or 'samah' is not renunciation or relinquishment of a particular mode of conduct in life but a rising into a heightened form of that conduct which is inclusive of all the significances of that particular conduct in its lower stage.

The human mind is not made to understand this meaning entirely, because we are born into a tradition of thinking which is social and personal, spatial and temporal; but this meaning that is hidden behind the great message of Karma-Yoga in the Bhagavad-

gita is neither spatial nor temporal. It is spiritual and, therefore, it cannot be associated with anything that we regard as important either in the society or in the world of space and time. This is why, perhaps, it has been said that the meaning of the Gita is really known to Krishna only, and nobody else knows it. Arjuna knew a little of it. Shuka knows it. Vyasa knows it. Others only hear it.

It is necessary on the part of a true seeker to reconstitute the pattern of his thinking, for the time being, in order to be able to comprehend the meaning of spirituality itself. Spirituality is not a social conduct. It is an internal transformation of consciousness, and this transformation is of a different quality and character altogether from the transformations we observe physically in the world of nature. This is why we require an initiation into this technique of thinking. This is called *Guru-Upadesha*. Why do you go to a Guru for initiation if you can understand everything merely by reading a book, by hearing a lecture; where comes the need for a master, a spiritual guide and initiation? The need arises because it is difficult to think in this way, because we are not being used to thinking in this manner. Our ways of thinking are the same ways from which we started in childhood. Even when we are seventy years of age we think in the same form qualitatively as we have been thinking when we were children. The pattern does not change though the content of thought may vary because of the growth in age. The quantity also may increase but the quality and the structure of thinking does not change. The old man thinks in the same way as a child

thinks. But it is highly essential that the very mould of thinking has to change in order that one may become spiritual. The spiritual transformation that is called for in the practice of Yoga is not a physical or a social revolution but an inward reconstitution of personality, a new mode of consciousness itself; and inasmuch as it has the touch of the non-temporal in it, it becomes difficult to grasp it, because all our thought is temporal and the principle of non-temporality or eternality present in this way of thinking to some extent, in some percentage, makes it difficult for us to stomach its significance.

What we make out from the third verse in the Sixth Chapter of the Gita is that we are not asked to renounce anything that is really there so that the gospel of the Gita, while it is, no doubt, one of renunciation, means a renunciation not of any existent meaning, value or thing, because it has already been said that the existent is the real and the real can never become the unreal.

The withdrawal or renunciation the Gita speaks of, the 'Anasakti' which is its great teaching, is not a renunciation of an existent something, because the existent cannot be renounced. It is absurd to think of abandoning what is really there, but the renunciation is of the error involved in thinking. So the renunciation is not of a meaning that is valuable or real, but of a mistake that is there in thinking. The blunder that we commit in our thinking is to be renounced; and when this is eliminated from the process of thinking, it gets purified, and the mistaken activity which is ordinary 'Karma' that binds, be-

comes Divine action and dynamism which is purifying and liberating. That is called Karma-Yoga. The 'Samah' that is mentioned in this verse, the serenity which is regarded as the higher means of practice, is a higher type of dynamism or 'Sattva' which cannot be compared with the dynamism or the absence of it in 'Tamas'. We have only to bring back to our memory the small illustration that a heightened movement may look like no movement. Divine action or the work of God is such a dynamism; it has raised itself to the status of such an intensity of frequency that not only the senses but even the mind cannot grasp this force. The speed of the mind is the highest of conceivable speeds, but the speed of consciousness is greater. That is why, perhaps, the Isa Upanishad tells us in some place that before one reaches a place, it is already there. Even before the mind tries to reach a particular destination with all its inconceivable speed and velocity, consciousness is already present, because its speed is greater than the great speed of the mind. The dynamism of consciousness is a peculiar type of heightened activity which is different from physical activity. For all purposes, it is absolute cessation of all action. But that is God's way of action. It may appear that God does nothing at all. God-Being is self-posed, self-absorbed. The Lord Siva is often depicted thus in our Puranas and in our tradition. You might have seen painted portraits of Siva seated in 'Padmasana', with closed eyes, and completely absorbed, as if He is unaware of what is taking place outside. He is closed to all activity. He is oblivious of what is taking place in the world, as it were; but the

truth is that the absorption of Siva in the height of meditation is not a darkness of ignorance and an absence of the knowledge of what is taking place in the universe. It is certainly an intense awareness of things which is likely to be mistaken for absence of awareness altogether. What the Bhagavadgita is expecting us to perform in the practice of Yoga is to rise from a lower type of activity to a higher type of activity. Here we have to add a marginal note that we have to understand the meaning of activity in its proper setting, its proper connotation. It is not movement physically, and so when we rise higher and higher in the realm of the spirit, in the reaches of the spiritual life, we do not become inactive in the sense of a useless individual, but we rise to be a more useful and comprehensive personality, capable of a greater action and endowed with a capacity to effect a greater achievement with the apparent absence of physical movement, where thought becomes intense.

Mental action is the real action; physical action by itself is no action. It is the mind that motivates even the physical body while it acts. If the mind is not active, and the body appears to be acting mechanically, nevertheless, disassociated from the consciousness of the mind, such action loses its significance. It is lifeless action. What binds or liberates is the mind and not the body. If we are bound here, it is because of the mind thinking in a particular manner; and if we are going to be liberated, that, too, is because of a peculiar change that is going to take place in the way of thinking. The body may be there in the same way, as it was. The *Jivan-*

mukta has a body which is the same as that which was there when he was born as a child, but he has changed inside. His mind has transformed itself and his consciousness has attained to a higher type of concentration. He has become a different being though he is endowed with the same body. The meaning of all this intricacy is brought out in a little more detail in the subsequent verse: "One is said to be established in Yoga, when one attaches oneself not either to the objects of the senses or to actions, and has renounced, all creative affirmation of the will." The word Sannyasa, meaning renunciation, occurring here is often defined as a mode of living disassociated from action. Now, inasmuch as the mind means everything in the performance of an action, we have to change our idea of Sannyasa itself, though we may, tentatively, take for granted that Sannyasa suggests withdrawal from action. But, what is action? *'Sarva-sankalpa-sannyasa'* is held to be the criterion of Yoga. The creative will or the affirmations of the psychological organ may be safely regarded as the cause of our bondage, and a re-orientation introduced into this system of creative willing is going to be the means of liberation. The individual will becomes the Divine Will when liberation is attained. While the individual will independently acts, one is supposed to be tending towards bondage. When the Divine Will acts and takes possession of one's personality, there is liberated Will operating. Here we have to bestow a little thought on the nature of the individual will and the Divine Will; because 'Sankalpa' is nothing but will, and we are told that there should be an abandonment or

relinquishment of all such willing for the purpose of getting established in Yoga, to become 'Yoga-arudha'. What does one mean by willing or 'Sankalpa'? And we have no bondage in life except the will.

The great author Schopenhauer wrote a masterpiece in three volumes, known as 'The World of Will and Idea', making out through his thesis that there is nothing in this world except the will. In the different stages of its meaning, the will is bondage and the will is liberation. The will that is binding is a particular type of will and it is this binding will that we are asked to renounce for getting established in Yoga. The binding will is the first self-affirmative urge within us which insists on the independence of the individual and an isolation of personality cut off from relationship with others. In short, it is the selfish will, the will that asserts the individual self, the bodily self, the personal self, the localised self;—this is the binding will. It is this will that we are asked to renounce when we are supposed to become *'Sarvasankalpa-sannyasins'*.

This is the hidden and the real meaning of 'Sannyasa'. The individual will urges and demands and clamours for isolation and absolute independence of personality. The 'I' is the meaning behind this will, 'I' in the individualised sense tethered to the bodily encasement. The bodily 'I' is the individual will. We know how much love we have for this body and what meaning we associate with bodily existence. Every value is sunk in the bodily life. Our pleasures are physical. The life that we live is physical, and every objective that we are pursuing in life is also

associated with the existence and continuance of the physical body and its needs. Such an affirmation is the individual will, which is the binding will. We may raise a question: "How does it bind? How does this will that affirms the physical individuality or the isolated personality bring about sorrow? It binds by bringing grief in a series, and this happens on account of the fact that the truth of things is different from what this individual will is affirming vehemently.

Truth succeeds, and it alone can succeed. Nothing else will succeed. What triumphs at all times is truth. Untruth has to be subjugated one day or the other. The affirmations of the individual will are not the truth. The truth is something different, and this the individual will is unable to comprehend or understand. It has a mistaken notion about truth and this notion is known as *avidya*. This is the ignorance that people are speaking of through all types of philosophy. This *avidya* is binding; the source of bondage is ignorance. We are told this again and again. What is this *avidya* which is binding? This ignorance or *avidya* is nothing but the inability of the individual will to understand that its affirmations are not the truth. The truth is something quite different, and this truth is inaccessible to the instruments that are available to the individual will and, therefore, the individual will is always sunk in sorrow, grief. It has not the means of approach to the truth as it is; and ignorance passes for knowledge, as the only value that is available and conceivable. The reason why the individual will or *Sankalpa* binds is because it has disassociated it-

self from the real which is the same as the true. Truth and Reality are the same. As a matter of fact, the affirmations of the individual will cannot work at all; there cannot be any individual function unless there is this disassociation from truth. The truth which we are referring to here as distinct from the affirmations of the individual will is the goal of life. This is the *Satya* that the Vedas proclaim, and this is the thing that asserts itself forcefully in every nook and corner of creation and through every event that takes place anywhere at any time; and the individual will struggles hard to repel the entry of the nature of this truth which also is persisting in gaining an entry into every nook and corner of creation. This is the Mahabharata or the Ramayana of the cosmic existence. This is the epic of creation, the Devasura-Sangrama, as we are told, the fight between the Devas and Asuras, about which so much has been written in the epics of mankind, the struggle between truth and untruth, the war that is there perpetually going on between the Divine Will and the individual will. The individual will cannot succeed because it is not the truth; and therefore it is punished with rebirth, a series of reincarnations, again and again; and in the gospel of the Bhagavadgita, Bhagavan Sri Krishna teaches us a technique by which the very roots of this individual will can be cut off.

This is the Yoga of the Bhagavadgita, the art of snapping at the very root the affirmations of the individual will or *sankalpa,* in order to become a Yoga-Arudha, which is nothing but the establishment of oneself in the status of the Divine Will.

The need for the renunciation of the affirmations of the individual will arises due to its irreconcilability with the requisiton of the Divine Will. This is the point made out in the statement, *Sarva-sankalpasannyasi Yogarudhastadochyate.*

Sarva-Sankalpa-Sannyasa is the relinquishment of the assertions, whatever they be, of the individual will. The irreconcilability between individual affirmations and the pattern of the Divine Will is something which the will of the individual in its present condition cannot properly understand; because the realm of the Divine, the Universal, happens to lie outside the ken of the vision of the individual, and due to this reason there has arisen the chance of the commission of an error on the part of the individual, by which it mistakes its own affirmation for the total reality.

The sorrow that follows as a consequence of these affirmations is attempted to be obviated by means which are really inapplicaple to the purpose. This is the reason behind the failure through the process of human history of all the endeavours of mankind to find peace in the world. Our efforts, perhaps, are genuinely motivated but are misapplied. The apparatus of our effort is unsuited to the purpose because the task on hand seems to be so immense that even the highest endowment of the human individual, the rational faculty, falls short of the ideal; and inasmuch as every effort of man is an outcome of the application of his will and reason which itself is far removed from the purpose on hand, there is obviously a failure in the attainment of the

ultimate purpose. Success as it is expected to come to us does not come. There has always been a struggle and a continuance of effort, right from time immemorial, for the achievement of an end which has not yet come near us. It seems to recede from us like the horizon. The nearer we appear to be approaching it, the farther it goes away from us. The cause behind this failure, the individual will cannot grasp because it has the egoism, the adamantine feeling, due to which it mistakes its efforts to be all-in-all and complete in its capacity, while there is a qualitative defect in the very nature of the effort of the human will on account of which it does not touch even the fringe of the Divine Purpose. The practice of Yoga, especially as it is propounded in the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, with which we are concerned at present, is a unique endeavour. In the different verses of the Gita, in this Chapter, we are explained practically the different stages by which there is to be brought about an inner qualitative transformation of the individual will for the purpose of its getting tuned with the intentions of the Divine Will, which is the meaning, the significance of Yoga essentially. The Yoga of the Bhagavadgita, the Yoga of meditation, *Dhyana,* is the inner qualitative tuning up of the essence of the individual with the essence in the cosmos. It is not merely a coming in contact of one thing with another, the human mind with the Divine Mind as if the two are essentially different, but a commingling of purpose in a union of intention and quality.

Yada viniyatam chittam atmany eva'vatishthate;
Nihsprihah sarvakamebhyo yukta ity uchyate tada.

This is a verse which gives in a few words the hidden implication of the practice that is expounded throughout the Sixth Chapter of the Gita. The point made out in this verse is that the mind is to be fixed in the Atman. This is Yoga. The restrained mind is established in the nature of the Self. This establishment of the controlled mind or the will in the constitution of the Self is really the Yoga of the Bhagavadgita. Now this is easily said but nothing can be more difficult to practise because the restraining of the mind, the 'niyamana' of the 'chitta', which is referred to in this half verse is all things and everything. What is the nature of the restraint that has to be exercised over the 'chitta' or the mind in order that it may be established in the Self, the Atman?

We have various types of Yoga, beginning from Hatha Yoga onwards, all which are supposed to be endeavouring towards its achievement, the purpose of Yoga, the control of mind. But unless the final aim is kept in view properly at every stage of the effort here, one is likely to miss the point and Yoga would not be achieved even in several lives of efforts. At every step, at every stage of the effort, the final end has to be kept before one's mental eye, and only then, it would be possible for us to restrain the mind in the manner intended for the ideal of Yoga. The purpose of the control of the mind, the restraint of the mind, the 'niyamana' of the 'chitta', is to make it harmonious, in constitution and quality, with the nature of the Atman in which it is expected to be established. This is precisely the essence of Yoga. There is a constitutional disparity between the 'chitta' or the mind and the nature of the Self.

There is a tendency in the mind to go outward in the direction of the objects located in space and time, and this tendency of the mind is precisely the opposite of what is required by the nature of the Self. As long as the mind is prone to this tendency, as long as it is habituated to this activity of moving towards objects of sense, it would not be possible to restrain it for the purpose of making it harmonious with the nature of the Self. The meaning of the term Self, again, is a point on which we have to bestow a little thought. Just as there has been a lot of misconception about the nature of the control of the mind through the different types of practice in Yoga, there has also been a misconstruing of the meaning of the nature of the Self. As it is difficult to understand what the mind is, so it is also difficult to know what the Self is. We are at a handicap either way. Neither can we restrain the mind when the nature of the mind is not known, nor can it be established in the Self when we do not know what the Self is. The Self is not any substance. It is not an entity. It is not a body. It is not an object. It is not something which is inside the body, as many people are likely to imagine. That the Atman is within, is a usual saying which we have heard oftentimes, but this 'within-ness' of the Atman is a peculiar connotation and meaning which is different from the spatial encasement of an object. The Atman is not inside in the sense of something being encased within the four walls of limitation of any kind in the physical sense. The 'within-ness' or the 'insideness' of the Atman as propounded in the Upanishads is a strange thing altogether. When we

say a person is inside a room, we have some idea of what insideness means, but it is not in this sense that we say that the Atman is inside. It is not as if the Atman is inside a body and is not outside. When we say that something is inside, it is understood that it is not outside. But we are also told by the very same scriptures that the Atman is all-pervading; it is omnipresent. So, how can it be said to be inside anything, when it is all-pervading, or omnipresent, all inclusive? What is the significance of this statement that the Atman is within? Here is the crux of the practice of Yoga. It is within. Yes! it is true, and it is also omnipresent. The two concepts are not incompatible. It is the strangeness of this concept that makes it difficult for us to conceive the Atman. How is it possible for an omnipresent Absolute to be inside? For this purpose we have to know the meaning in which the word 'inside' is used in the scriptures. The 'pratyak-chetana' which the scriptures speak of, the inward-turned consciousness with which the Self is identified, is not the spatial inwardness of any physical substance or even of thought, but a *Universal Subjectivity* which is characteristic of the Self, with which condition, or state, the mind is supposed to be set in harmony. For this purpose a peculiar and strange and novel technique of restraint of the mind is to be adopted, not the ordinary methods of restraint that we are used to. You cannot control the mind in the ordinary manner as you control a horse, or a lion or an elephant; because the restraint of the mind intended here is the setting in harmony of the mind

with the characteristic of the Self which is at once 'Universal' and 'inside'.

The inwardness of the Atman is the subjectivity of the Atman. The Atman is not an object. It is not a 'vishaya' and, therefore, the movement of the mind towards an object is not the way of contacting the Atman, because any type of external movement is incompatible with the requisitions of the nature of the Selfhood of anything. The Atman is not outside, though it is everywhere. This is another peculiarity which we have to understand. You may ask me, why it should not be outside when we say it is everywhere. A thing that is everywhere should also be outside. Yes, and no. It is inside and yet it is everywhere. The meaning is this, that it is an omnipresence which is characterised by subjectivity, the meaning of which we have to properly understand. This is the 'Vaishvanara Atma-tattva' which the Upanishad speaks of. The Atman is Vaishvanara, says the Upanishad, which means to say it is the Self of everyone. The Selfhood of anything implies the non-objectivity of that particular thing. The connotation of the word Self is the impossibility of its getting objectified in any manner whatsoever. It cannot be objectified even in concept, even in thought, even in mind. You cannot, even by the farthest stretch of imagination, externalise the Self. That is the meaning of the word 'Self',—'Atman', and yet it is everywhere. Is it possible for anyone, is it humanly conceivable to visualise that state where the mind can fix itself in an omnipresence which is incapable of externality or objectivity. This

peculiar, novel, enigmatic status of Being is God-hood. This is 'Atma-tattva'. We are often told that the Atman is Brahman; and when we study these passages in the Upanishads we are likely to imagine that one thing is identified with another thing. The Atman is set in tune with Brahman, or it is merged in it, or identified with it in some manner. But, there is no such thing at all. The Atman is not going to be identified with Brahman, and there is not going to be any connection between the two, because they are not two beings. They are only two statements of a novel state which cannot be easily grasped unless it is explained in its various aspects.

When we lay stress on the omnipresent aspect of this Being, we call it Brahman. When we stress the Selfhood of this very same omnipresence, we call it the Atman. The two terms, Brahman and Atman, do not connote two different things, but two different definitions or two aspects of one and the same Being. The Self-aspect is called the Atman; the Omnipresence-aspect is called Brahman. Now, we have to construe the meaning of both these aspects in a single gamut of the act of the mind. This is Yoga, actually. In one instantaneous grasp of thought, it should be possible for us to enter into the blend that is indicated by both these aspects,—Atman and Brahman. This is not possible ordinarily, because the Selfhood which is incapable of objectivity cannot be conceived as an omnipresent Being, because the moment we conceive omnipresence, we externalise it; it becomes something spatial and, therefore, temporal.

Our idea of omnipresence is something like that of the vast expanded space. But space is not a proper comparison with this omnipresence, because though space is everywhere, it is external. It is something that the mind can conceive and, therefore, space is also temporal. The non-temporal omnipresence which is the nature of the Self is non-spatial. Because of its being non-spatial, it is non-objective and, so, the normal activity of the mind in terms of a 'vishaya' or an object is to be checked for the purpose of establishing itself in the nature of the Atman. This technique of checking the mind is, again, called Yoga. This is indicated in this word, —*Viniyatachitta.*

Difficult indeed is it to grasp this meaning. More difficult is it to practise it, because the mind revolts against even an idea of such a definition of the Being that is our ideal in Yoga. The mind cannot conceive anything that is non-spatial, non-temporal; and, so, it cannot conceive the Atman. Hence it cannot establish itself in Yoga. Therefore, a gradual method is prescribed so that there is no attempt at a sudden jump into the sky which, of course, is impracticable. There is a prescription of a graduated technique of internal growth by which the mind is capable of rising above itself in self-transcendence. These are the stages of Yoga especially narrated in the aphorisms of Patanjali. Also, in a very precise manner, Bhagavan Sri Krishna gives us an indication of the necessity to tune ourselves at every level of our being, when he says:

Yuktahara-viharasya yukta-cheshtasya karmasu,
Yukta-svapnavabodhasya yogo bhavati duhkhaha.

We are asked to be equilibrated in our attitude and conduct at every level and stage of our life. There is not to be an over-emphasis on any aspect. Balance is Yoga. We are to pass through the various stages by adopting the golden mean or the *via media*, the middle path, as it is usually called. We should not go to extremes at any step, at any stage, any level of our practice. The idea behind this prescription of the middle path is that we should not ignore any aspect of reality. While we are generally prone to conceive reality as a transcendent Being, we should not forget that it is also a down-to-earth present reality. It is not merely above, but is also immanent. It is manifest even as the lowest conceivable matter. Even here in this body, which is the immediately presented reality before the senses and the mind, there is an element of truth which cannot be ignored. It is to be transcended, no doubt, but we are not to ignore it. The fact that something is to be transcended does not imply that it is worthless. Every level of being is a stage or a degree of reality, and every degree has a meaning and is as important as every other as long as one is in that particular stage. The stage in which we are at any moment of time is the only reality for us. We cannot judge the lower in terms of the higher unless we have reached the higher, though the ideal of the higher should be there before our mind's eye, in order that we may be able to conduct ourselves higher. The balance that is required of a seeker in the practice of Yoga is, again, a very difficult thing to conceive.

There is always a tendency to over-enthusiasm

in the seekers of Yoga. They want only God and nothing else. 'I want not the world'. These are the stock pronouncements that seekers make in their initial zeal. It is wonderful to love God alone, and want God alone; but one must know what God is, before trying to know the method of contacting Him and expecting Him to be one's sole aim and purpose. When untutored and immature minds conceive God as the ideal of life, and in an enthusiasm, or ebullition of devotion, concentrate themselves on this imagined ideal, they are likely to imagine God as a transcendent Being, bereft of relevance to the immediate realities of life. Then it is that they feel the pinch of these realities of the realm in which they are located at the present moment. Then there comes a difficulty which is inconceivable. There can be revolt in the physical body, the vital organism, the senses and the various proclivities of the mind. The revolt of the body may lead to illness, sickness of a different type; the revolt of the vital organism may lead to neurotic conditions and complexes of various types as the psycho-analysts describe,—moodiness, a melancholy attitude, a sour face and a sort of inner grief which is the opposite of what is expected of the spiritual seeker.

At every stage of the practice of Yoga there is expected on the part of a seeker a positivity of intention and inclination. There should be, in the face of a seeker, visible delight, a satisfaction, a joy, though it may be of a lesser degree, but not melancholy. The difficulties mentioned by Patanjali are the obstacles in Yoga. They are not indications of success, but problems to be solved. These obstacles

face us on account of our missing the point, due to an extreme of feeling. We cannot catch God as a transcendent Being merely; we have to tune ourselves to Him in His omnipresence. This is a very significant admonition of the Bhagavadgita. God has to be known in His reality and not in any imaginary form which the mind is likely to bolster up as a theoretical definition. The harmony in diet, etc. mentioned in the Bhagavadgita signifies the need for balance in the practice of Yoga. It is essential for a seeker to know where he stands. We must know our strengths as well as our weaknesses. We should neither over-estimate nor under-estimate ourselves, which means to say, we have to be honest and sincere to our own true Self, in all its degrees of expression.

The practice of Yoga is not a demonstration before others. It is an inward approach to the Ultimate Reality and a surrender of oneself before that all-knowing Being and, therefore, it is necessary to be thoroughly dispassionate here. Any kind of hypocrisy is uncalled for. Now, one can be hypocritical knowingly or sometimes unknowingly. We may imagine ourselves to be what we are not, due to an ignorance that is preponderating in us. Sometimes, of course,—this cannot be ruled out,—we can be deliberately hypocritical, also. This is unfortunate, indeed; because to deceive oneself is perhaps the greatest of harms possible. Thus, before stepping into the path of Yoga, one has to assess oneself properly, like an auditor calculating accounts of a firm, where he keeps his eye on every little point, and knows the strength and the weaknesses of the

accounts, simultaneously. We have to strike a balance-sheet of our own psychological personality and know where we stand at any given time. We have to know that we are in the presence of God Himself when we step into the realm of Yoga. We are not just social beings any more. Even the first step in Yoga is an entry into the spiritual field.

Even as the aspiration to tread the path of Yoga is supposed to transcend the realm of ordinary learning,—even the learning of the Vedas,—because the life spiritual is a stepping into a new quality of living, and it is quite different from the usual mode of thinking in social terms or from the point of view of one's own individual personality. So, what is to be brought out in this context is that we should not be too enthusiastic about God-realisation unless we are clear about the structure of our own minds and our own weaknesses, especially. The weaknesses of the psychological organ are also as important as the aspirations of the mind for God; because the shortcomings of one's personality are certain erroneous movements of the mind. These movements have to be set right by intelligent techniques. There is no use merely closing one's eyes to these weaknesses, because they can rise up one day as vehement tornadoes and attack you unawares. Even a small weakness can assume a large proportion, like a mountain, one day, if it is neglected for a long time, and, therefore, even a least weakness is not to be ignored, and one has to be very honest about its assessment. Well, of course, it does not mean that you have to tom-tom your foibles before the public and in the newspapers. You can keep a private

diary of your own and make a secret jotting of what your weaknesses are, which cannot be compatible with spiritual life. These have to be overcome with a tremendous effort by the treading of the middle path, by no over-emphasis on any side. You cannot suppress your mind merely because it has a weakness. The weakness is a kind of illness, and you cannot suppress the illness. You have to cure the illness by intelligent means of meditation.

The Yoga practice is not a suppression of the mind or the will. It is rather a sublimation of the constitution of the whole mental realm. It is a boiling of the mind into its quintessence and an enabling of it to evaporate into the cosmic atmosphere, and, therefore, you are not to exercise a forced volition, or will, on any aspect of shortcoming in the mind before you actually take to any positive step to practise Yoga; and the weakness can be overcome by various methods, just as a good physician adopts several means in treating an illness by injection, dietetics, regimen, etc., together with the introduction of a proper medicine, as well as by isolation, quarantine treatment, etc. The mind also has to be treated in this manner. You cannot apply just one method; you may have to isolate the mind psychologically. You may have to fast it sometimes, and, sometimes, you may have to feed it; but you must know how to feed it and when to fast it, in what proportion, where, when and in what manner. This is the technique of a good doctor or a physician. You cannot apply the wrong method to the mind because the mind is 'you'. It is not something outside you. It is not outside because it is your

own inner structure that you call the mind. You are treating your own self. In Yoga, the object and the subject are identically treated. You are the means and you are also the end. At every different stage of rise in the practice of Yoga, the very same thing becomes the subject as well as the object in different degrees of intensity, until, lastly, the stage is reached where the difference between the subjective aspect and the objective aspect gets narrowed down to an identity of being, so that there is neither the subject nor the object in the end. That state of Supreme Being which is neither to be regarded as a subject nor as an object is the omnipresent Atman in which the mind is to be established, and it is for this purpose that this 'niyamana' or the restraint of the mind is prescribed in the Gita.

The Bhagavadgita does not always go into minor details of description. It gives a broad outline of the various stages of practice. It is up to us to know the intentions, the meanings behind these statements there, and sometimes we have to read between the lines. We have to know what could be the character or the nature of the restraint to be exercised over the mind in order to see that it is established in the omnipresence of the Self. Stage by stage, it is necessary to educate the mind in the art of non-objectivity. That is the meaning of self-restraint,—the restraint of the lower self for the purpose of the experience of the higher Self. There are stages of the lower self, and also there are stages of the higher Self, simultaneously. So, at every step there is one degree of the lower self that has to be controlled and overstepped and one degree of

the higher Self that has to be reached. When the higher Self that is immediately above is reached, it becomes the lower self to the next higher, so that you have a purpose to be achieved by self-restraint at every stage. But at every stage the nature of the restraint varies in its qualitative technique. The technique that you adopt in one stage may not be applied to the next one, though the instruction is that there has to be a restraint of the lower for the purpose of the experience of the higher. One must know what sort of restraint is to be exercised on a particular type of lower self, because there are degrees in the intensity of the lower as they are there in the higher, or the next above.

All this requires constant guidance from a spiritual Master, as you go to a doctor when you are under treatment for a chronic illness. Why do you go to the physician? Because, everyday you have a new problem, and sometimes there can be a reaction of the treatment when the treatment is not properly administered. And oftentimes, you will have new feelings and experiences,—physically, vitally and mentally. It is for this purpose that you go to the physician, to compare your experiences and the feelings with his knowledge so that he may tell you what is happening and what the next step is going to be in the treatment. Likewise, for a protracted period, one may have to be in the vicinity of a spiritual guide. This is not a technique to be learnt by a study of books, because this is a way of living which is full of vitality and meaningful significance. It is connected with practical life at every stage, and it is not merely a question of understanding or grasp-

ing a theoretical technique. Inasmuch as every step in Yoga, even the least, even the minutest, is connected with practical living with your own self, there is a need for personal guidance, because when a particular method is adopted, a technique is used in the control of the mind in meditation, certain experiences are likely to follow automatically, and these experiences will tell upon the entire system,—physical, vital and psychological. At that time you must be able to know what is happening. You should not be flabbergasted or confounded. Patanjali, especially mentions various indications of what is likely to happen, like tremors of the body and visions of various kinds, and so on. The various experiences, physical as well as mental, may be the processes of the treatment itself, but you must be able to know that they are the necessary stages that you have to pass through. Again, I have to emphasise the need for a *Guru* here, because, sometimes, it may look that the practice of Yoga is like playing with fire. It is held by adepts that the effort at control of the mind may be compared to baling out the water of the ocean with a blade of grass.

With confidence and steadfastness of mind, with a determined will and a carefully chalked-out understanding, one has to set oneself to the task of the restraint of the mind for the purpose of establishing it in the Self; and you must be as patient as the person who would try to empty the ocean with a blade of grass. It may look practically impossible, but one day, perhaps, it may become possible. The difficulty in this practice arises on account of the avidity of the mind in adhering to its present notions

and ways of thinking in terms of the objects of sense and relation to society etc., and in trying to apply these rules and laws of physical and social perception to the realm spiritual, where a new law altogether prevails. The law spiritual is qualtitatively different from the law social and physical, and, therefore, our traditions which are applicable and valuable and highly meaningful in human society may not have any meaning for the life spiritual. Thus, there is a need for entering into a new type of life's evaluations. You have to take a 'new birth,' almost, when you enter the spiritual path. You have to be 'reborn,' as the great masters often tell us. Unless we be reborn, there is no hope. Here rebirth means a total transformation of the organism, including the notions of the mind, the very way of thinking itself, a reorientation of the structure of the psyche, for the purpose of getting oneself tuned to the laws of the life spiritual. This is the profound significance of this pithy statement in this verse of the Bhagavadgita:

Yada viniyatam chittam atmany eva'vatishthate;
Nihsprihah sarvakamebhyo yukta ity-uchyate tada.

The mind becomes freed from all the desires for objects of sense, spontaneously, and as a matter of course, without any special effort on one's part, just as, when one wakes up from dream, there is a spontaneous withdrawal of the mind from everything that it saw in dream. This is the positive aspect of self-restraint which will bring the fruit of delight and inner freedom from conflict and tension of every kind. As a matter of fact, the test of success in Yoga is the extent of the freedom one feels in oneself

internally, the strength one experiences within, and the joy that manifests itself from one's depths, without any special exertion to obtain things from outside. Nothing might have happened from the outside, but inwardly everything has changed. The joy that is reflected in the face of a person and the positivity that characterises the personality would be an indication of the percentage of success that is achieved in the practice of Yoga.

The retention of the mind in the nature of the Self or the Atman, which is the main theme of discussion in the *Dhyanayoga* section of the Bhagavadgita, is the essence of the whole teaching, and it sums up the very essence and the meaning of the aim of life of all mankind. The equilibrium that preponderates in the relation between the mind and the Self is the state of Yoga, and this state has to be reached by efforts which have to be put forth very slowly and gradually, inch by inch, as it were, missing not even a single step in the process of the movement of the ascent, for missing any step would be a predecessor to a fall. The difficulty in this practice is really the context of the lengthy teaching which is the Bhagavadgita upto the eighteenth chapter; and in a way we may say that the eighteen chapters are the eighteen steps in the practice. Inasmuch as nothing can be more difficult than this attempt on the part of the soul to unite itself with the Divine Purpose of the universe, we are asked to go very slowly and very cautiously:

Sanaih-sanair uparamed buddhya dhritigrihitaya;
Atmasamstham manah kritva na kimchid api chintayet.

Yato-yato nischarati manas chanchalam asthiram;
Tatas tato niyamyai'tad atmanyeva vasam nayet.

This is the teaching of the actual practice. You must exert your control over the mind without allowing it to feel that any pressure is exerted. That is the technique of the educational process in any field of life. The mind has to be enabled to flower or blossom forth into a higher experience spontaneously and automatically, without pressurising it into any kind of pain or sorrow in the practice. The more you are able to introduce the principle of satisfaction into the practice, the more is the likelihood of an early achievement; because any pain that is inflicted upon the mind may be a causative factor of a recoil of the mind. Hence it is that while there should be intense ardour for the purpose of the practice, there should be no over-enthusiasm. That means to say that we should not over-estimate our powers. God is, no doubt, at our back and he is the greatest help in this endeavour of the soul for this Supreme Achievement, but the way in which God works is a mystery by itself; and inasmuch as this mystery cannot be grasped, one has to move only in proportion to the extent of one's understanding of this mystery, and when the mystery remains an object of one's ignorance it may not be able to render conscious help.

Understanding and feeling blend together in the practice. There is a gradual coming together of these two functions. While in the initial stages the understanding may predominate over the feelings, and the feeling may be at the background, so that one may be under the impression that the heart is

not cooperating with the understanding, by assiduous steadfastness in this practice, one would be able to bring the two together until they do not remain two faculties but one focussed force of intuitive cognition. In fact intuition is nothing but the coming together of understanding and feeling. In normal human perception they stand apart. The head and the heart do not go together always; but they become one when the third eye opens, as they say, and the physical eyes are no more necessary for the vision of perfection. For this achievement the practice has to be very gradual in the sense that one has to observe the extent of reality present in the different stages of one's ascent; and the most important thing to remember in the practice is to be honest to the particular stage in which one is stationed at any given moment of time. One should not wrongly imagine that one is in a higher state than the one in which one is really. The mind can stretch itself into an imaginary condition of a false achievement and one can be mistaken in this concept.

There are several sincere seekers who are prone to the mistake of thinking that they are liberated souls: the only duty they have is to save the world, and they have already saved themselves, and entered the Infinite. While they can be thoroughly mistaken in this feeling, they may be cocksure that they are right. So, this is a difficulty into which one may fall as if into a quagmire in the middle of the practice; and no one can be of help here as the understanding has failed. It is the failing of one's understanding that makes one feel that one is in such an elevated position. The rationality gets

stifled and it becomes torpid instead of getting transparent, and this is due to the interference of old '*Samskaras*', or buried impressions, frustrated desires, etc. The frustrated feelings need not necessarily be those of this present life. There are feelings and feelings, impressions after impressions, piled up like thick layers of clouds in the sub-conscious and the unconscious levels of the mind which retard the progress of the soul towards its aim. It needs no mention that we have passed through various lives. This is not the only life we are living, and whatever we are today is a fraction of the total of which we are made, the larger part of which lies hidden as a potential power in the unconscious layer of our personality, acting, of course, like a spring which pushes forward certain impressions and impulses into the surface of consciousness and compels the conscious level to commit the error of thinking that it is totally free in the conduct of its ideas and thoughts through the daily vicissitudes of life. If we take into consideration the presence of this motive force behind our conscious activities,—what we call the unconscious level,—one would very much doubt if there is any freedom of will at all. It is the conclusion of psycho-analysts today that there is no such thing as the freedom of will. It is only a chimera because, according to their finding, whether they are wholly right or not, the conscious activities of the mind which are the causes of the feeling of the sense of freedom in oneself are themselves the outcome of certain hidden impulses which, like dark forces, work from within and drive a fraction of these aspects of the personality into the conscious

level for fulfilment of certain purposes which in our traditional language, is called the sumtotal of the *Prarabdha-karma*.

The present condition of our life, the life that we are living today in the conscious stage, cannot be regarded as the whole of our personality. There are many who think that there is what is called a collective unconscious, a racial unconscious, and sometimes there is also a set of opinions held by people that there can be even a cosmic unconscious. Perhaps this is corroborated by even the Vedanta philosophy where it says that there is such a thing called Ishvara wherein the unconscious personalities of all the individuals are kept latent in a seed-form. Thus, it is not safe on the part of any seeker to be totally sure that the practice is properly directed at all times. One can go wrong while being sure that one is right. Your confidence that you are right is no test of your being right, because this confidence is merely the result of the functioning of the unconscious mind which need not necessarily be the total of your personality. You may be under the pressure of an impulse from within which has not fully manifested itself in the conscious level and is working inside behind veiled iron curtains, of which one cannot be aware, and so one can make the mistake of thinking the wrong way. Here, again, comes the need for the guidance from a competent person who knows the path and has trodden the path and knows the pitfalls. Since these hurdles are possible and inescapable for anyone and everyone, it would be wisdom on the part of people, seekers, to go slowly so that there may not be a necessity to retrace the

steps that one has already taken forward. You can avoid the possibility of a fall into a lower region which happens on account of a sudden jump to the levels which one cannot reach under the conditions prevailing. Hence the caution: *Sanaih sanair upa-ramed buddhya dhritigrihitaya.*

With the courage that is born of confidence well-directed, one has to propel the force of one's understanding towards the direction of the achievement and it has to go very slowly; the slower is it done the better it is. There is no need to be too anxious about the time-limit involved in the process of God-realisation. It can take its own time. God is not going to run away. He is always there. You need not be under any doubt that if you do not catch Him today he may not be available tomorrow. Inasmuch as He is eternal He is always available. But one has to be prepared to be able to come in contact with this power, and for this purpose the vessel has to be properly cleaned by the practice of the necessary pre-requisites known in our discipline and in our tradition as the *Sadhana-chatush-taya*, the practice of *Yama, Niyama,* etc. In the understanding of this injunction of this verse of the Bhagavadgita that we have to move slowly, we have to grasp its implication. What does it actually mean by saying 'go slowly?' One has to be very clear about one's own self. You have to be equipped with a thorough knowledge of your present psychological state and the powers that you can wield in the field of practice. The essence of the matter is that other desires are working in the mind, other than the desire for God or the great aim of Yoga

towards which one is endeavouring to move. Is there any distracting impulse hidden in the mind which shows its head now and then, though not always, and makes one feel that there can be joys other than the joys of God-realisation? Well, this is a very important thing to remember, because it is not possible for a human being to be totally free from the feeling of the reality of objects of sense in front of oneself; and as long as there is the consciousness of the presence of objects in one's presence, there is also felt a need to establish a relationship of oneself with this object. Who can say that one is unaware of the presence of the world in one's front? There is this world staring before you as a hard reality, and the belief in the existence of a world outside is itself a proof of your need or necessity felt within to establish a vital contact with it and do something with it. You either love it or do not love it but you are at least conscious of it.

The objects of the world are somehow capable of temptation in various ways, and the principal obstacle in the practice of meditation, the Yoga proper, is temptation; nothing but that. The wisdom that one would exercise in this context is to free oneself, as far as possible, from involving oneself in atmospheres which are capable of this temptation. It is better not to fall sick at all rather than fall sick and then go to a doctor for treatment. Once you have recourse to temptations it would be difficult to withdraw yourself from this involvement; because the temptation is nothing but a belief in the reality of an object and a feeling from within that the object of sense is capable of bring-

ing about a joy which cannot in any way be less than the joy which one is aspiring after through Yoga. Whatever be the effort of one's understanding, the heart can detract one's attention from the concentration of the understanding, and once a chance is given for even a little leakage of energy through the feeling towards an object of sense, this leakage can become a torrent, a flood and the bund can burst, and here it is that the understanding can totally fail us. One should not wait until the temptation comes; and no one should have the hardihood to imagine that one can stand a temptation. That is not possible when it comes; and we have picturesque and dramatic stories and anecdotes of these phenomena in our Epics and Puranas.

Great problems and difficulties had to be faced even by masters, and we should not think that we are greater than they. What happens to one can happen to another, and everyone can be susceptible to the same weakness which is the common feature of all human nature. It is, therefore, wise for a seeker to be aware of the power of Nature, the extent of the problem that one may have to face and the hidden resources of distraction which Nature holds within her bosom, multifarious in their character and picturesque in their forms, inconceivable to even the depths of one's mind. Therefore, with guidance received from one's own *Guru,* or Master, one has to endeavour hard to live in an atmosphere physically free from temptations, not merely psychological in the beginning stages. That is why people go to sequestered retreats, resort to *Ashramas* and holy shrines and temples, etc., to forests and stiller

atmosphere, so that the chances of temptation get diminished, though they cannot be completely avoided or obliterated. With the aid of physical solitude, one has to learn the art of psychological detachment, because physical seclusion is not the only thing that is called for or necessary. It is only a preparation for a higher practice which is internal detachment, because physically one may be in a very holy place like Badarinath or Kedarnath, but mentally one can be in Hollywood. So, while physical solitude is a necessity, it is not everything. It is only a preparation for the internal refinement of personality which has to be acquired and achieved through other means than mere physical practices.

The Bhagavadgita is a great guide in this line of conduct towards self-control. The great injunction that we are provided with, for example, in the Thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavadgita commencing with the verse, *amanitvam adambhitvam* etc., tells us something about what we have to do in this connection, how we can psychologically purify ourselves and gradually move onwards, and prepare ourselves steadily, and gain strength from within, so that we may be ready for the practice. And together with this caution from the physical side as well as the psychological side, one has to be persistent and tenacious in the practice, in the sense that one cannot leave it even for a day, just as we do not miss a meal. We have to take at least one meal every day, and we feel like fish out of water if a single meal is missed. Like that, one should feel unhappy if one is unable to be seated for this practice even for a single day. The great masters in

Yoga tell us that not only has the practice to be continuous and unremitting, but it has also to be coupled with an intense feeling of love and affection for the practice. The heart has to be centred there and our love has to be focussed in the practice. All the loves of the world have to be brought together into a concentrated essence and this focussed attention of affection should be fixed in the practice of Yoga, because no mother can be so affectionate as Yoga. It can take care of us at all times and protect us from all dangers. But one has to know the majesty of this practice in order that the loves of the world can be withdrawn from the objects of sense and concentrated in the practice.

Why is it that the mind is distracted? Why is it that we cannot concentrate the mind? How is it that we feel unhappy when we are seated for meditation for an hour or two and want to get up as early as possible? The reason is that the heart and the feeling are not co-operating with the will. The heart is somewhere else, and naturally, we are where our heart is. If our heart is somewhere else, we are also there, and naturally, we are not in the practice which is supposed to be what we are conducting. Where our heart is, there our treasure is, and where our treasure is, there our heart is. If our treasure is somewhere else, secretly beckoning us towards itself and calling our attention towards it, we have to pay our dues and debts towards that centre which calls us for attention. When we are distracted, when the mind is pulled in some other direction than the one which is the ideal in Yoga, what we are expected to do is not to draw the mind

back by force and compel it to practise meditation once again but to understand why this is happening at all. We have to exercise understanding at every step, under every condition. If the mind is distracted, why is it distracted? What has happened? If we are seated for contemplation on the Divine Ideal, why is it that the mind jumps into some other object of sense? Naturally, the reason behind it should be that certain values are recognised by the mind in the object which attracts the attention, and these values are, of course, real values. If they are unreal, the mind will not go there. So the mind is seeing a set of values in an object and considers these values as real, other than the reality which we have theoretically held before our mind's eye in the practice of Yoga. Mostly our practices in Yoga are theoretical, and the practice, really speaking, is motivated by certain feelings at variance with the conclusions of the understanding. Our feelings are our real guides.

Again we have to emphasis the point that the feelings have to be properly investigated into and they have to be brought to the surface of consciousness, they have to be analysed threadbare and placed before ourselves as if in daylight. We must be in a position to understand the character or the nature of every one of our feelings and know the causes behind their rise. When we are sincerely getting devoted to the practice of Yoga, perhaps, we will find no time to do anything else, because all the time we have to be cautious like a soldier in the battle-field. We cannot be wool-gathering, we cannot sleep, we have to be vigilant to observe what

is happening from all sides. As a matter of fact, the practice of Yoga is nothing but a warfare. In a sense, it is a *Mahabharata*, it is a *Ramayana*. It is a struggle of the finite to confront the infinite at every level of ascent, an attempt to tune oneself to the requirements of the infinite in the different degrees of its manifestation. So it is that the Gita exhorts us:

Sanaih-sanair uparamed buddhya dhritigrihitaya;
Atmasamstham manah kritva na kimchid api chintayet.

Once we are able to fix ourselves in the Atman, then there is nothing else to think.

Yato-yato nischarati manas chanchalam asthiram;
Tatas tato niyamyai'tad atmanyeva vasam nayet.

As a rider on a horse, or a person who drives a horse-carriage, tries to restrain the movement of the horse by means of the reins which he holds in his hands, so is the power of the Atman to exert its control over the movements of the mind by means of the reins of the relation that obtains between the two. Towards the end of the Third Chapter of the Gita we are mentioned this aspect of the practice, also. It is not possible to control the mind merely by ordinary means available to us. We have to take the help of a higher force:

Indriyani paranyahur indriyebhyah param manah;
Manasas tu para buddhir yo buddheh paratas tu sah.

This verse is a guide in the practice. We have to take the help of a higher stage, receive strength and guidance from the immediately higher level, so

that the lower may be mastered. In fact, the moral force which one is supposed to apply in one's practical life is nothing but the way of determining everything that is lower in terms of the higher which is immediately above. The higher which is immediately above will be the source of a vision of the character of what is immediately above. Only, one has to be careful enough to observe what is happening, and by the power of one's vital connection with that which is above, it is possible to restrain the movements of the mind in a lower level. Thus it is that we have to spend the whole of our life, as it were, in the practice. One should not be despondent. "Am I to waste all my time only in this?"

Here is a point which makes out that the whole of one's life is a spiritual dedication. Here is one's supreme duty. "Renounce all other duties, and resort to this primeval duty." The error involved in the variegatedness of duties has to be abandoned. It is not the abandonment of duty that is suggested here, but the relinquishment of a mistake that is involved in the concept of a variety of duties, with a knowledge of the fact that there can be only one duty ultimately, which includes every other duty that one may regard as meaningful or necessary. So, it is not that the Bhagavadgita asks us to relinquish anything or abandon anything, renounce anything. It is true that, it asks us to renounce something. What it asks us to renounce or abandon is the ignorance that is involved in a particular stage of experience for the purpose of sublimating it into a higher condition which is more inclusive than the

lower. How this is done is also mentioned in certain verses which are to follow later;

Sarvabhutastham atmanam sarvabhutani chatmani;
Ikshate yogayuktatma sarvatra samadarsanah.

Yo mam pasyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi pasyati;
Tasyaham na pranasyami sa cha me na pranasyati.

Sarvabhutasthitam yo mam bhajatyekatvam asthitah;
Sarvatha vartamanopi sa yogi mayi vartate.

Atmaupamyena sarvatra samam pasyati yorjuna;
Sukham va yadi va duhkham sa yogi paramo matah.

These verses towards the end of the Sixth Chapter give us certain positive aspects of this apparently negative injunction for renunciation, namely, that true renunciation is the transcendence of the notion of spatio-temporal externality in the light of the omnipresence of God.

The tendency of aspiration for communion with Reality is present, though in a latent form, even at the lowest level conceivable. Even in crass material existence this urge is not absent. The urge for awakening into a consciousness of Reality manifests itself in various stages, and even the so-called unconscious condition of inorganic matter is not outside the purview of this universal longing for the Absolute. The condition of the grossest form of ignorance, as can be seen in inanimate matter, is only one character of the preparation of the potential individuality to rise to the status of Supreme Experience. In this sense we may say that nothing lies outside the Absolute. Not the worst possible evil, not the ugliest of forms, not the greatest intensity

of vice can be regarded as external to the constitution of the Absolute; because in this cosmic menstruum, which we call the Absolute, everything gets transformed into the finest form of gold or diamond, whatever might have been its shape or contour earlier. When it is viewed as an isolated part, a broken piece of a beautiful bangle, it does not look really beautiful, because it has lost connection with the whole of which it is a part. Even broken pieces may create the shape of a beauty if they are brought together to form the pattern of the completeness of which they form a fragment. You bring together all the pieces of the broken bangle and arrange these pieces in the shape of the roundness which is the essential form of the bangle, and you will not see this broken piece. The broken character of the piece vanishes when it enters into the vital completeness which is the rotundity of the bangle, and it is beautiful, once again. What has happened to that ugliness of the shape which was seen in the part, which was the broken piece?

The beauty of a thing or the ugliness of an object, the virtue and the vice that we see in things, are all view-points and not essentialities. They do not really exist, but they are the character, the manner, the method of reading a meaning into that substance from a particular standpoint. Now, the standpoint of the Absolute is inclusive of every conceivable standpoint. It is my standpoint and yours and of every blessed being. When the total view-point cannot be envisaged, the perfection of creation cannot be visualised.

Why has God created an ugly world, is a question that somebody puts now and then. But it is a matter to ponder over, if it is really ugly. Why is there pain in this world? But do we know that there is pain? Our feeling of pain is our definition of pain, and the feeling of the pain can be there even if the pain is not really there as an objective existence, because our definition of values and our reading of meaning into things is really a result of the conditioning that characterises our individuality, and the defect of creation is nothing but the finitude of the individual who sees the defect. There cannot be defect in perfection which is the Total Being, and all evil, whatever be the nature of the evil, whether it is physical, social, political or ethical, all these forms of ugliness, evil and irreconcilability are the readings which the isolated consciousness makes in the projected forms of the counterpart of its own nature. Whatever we see in this world, whether as the physical Nature or the individuals in the forms of living beings, all these are the correlative of our own observing centre. We should be able to appreciate that when we view anything, when we try to understand anything, and when we judge any value for the matter of that, we do not include ourselves as a part of that observation. We stand outside the object which we try to observe and judge. So, there is an incompleteness already introduced into the object of judgment by the isolation of ourselves from that which we are judging, but from which we cannot really separate ourselves from the point of view of perfection.

The Real is not exclusive of anything. It is

inclusive of all things. It includes us also. The vision that is perfect cannot exclude the position of the observer, and an observer cannot have a correct observation of anything if he tries to stand outside as an observer. There is no such thing as a correct observation of any type whatsoever, whether scientific or otherwise, if the observer is to be vitally severed from the context of the object that is going to be observed and studied. This is the reason why we cannot have a knowledge of the Ultimate Reality through scientific observations, because scientific experiment and observation is the method adopted in knowing an object through an instrument, in which position and act of perception the observing individual always stands apart from the object. The location of the instrument also disturbs, to some extent, the nature of the observation and the conclusion arrived at through the observation. We have in modern scientific language, what is known as the principle of indeterminacy', which is an outcome of observing the sub-atomic structure of things through the subtlest instrument possible, and a conclusion that has led to a theory that, perhaps, causality does not obtain in Nature, definite effects may not follow from definite causes, because of a hypothesis that the movement of electrons around a nucleus cannot be determined mathematically or through any kind of algebraic equation, even if they are observed by the finest of instruments. Inasmuch as it has become not possible to observe mathematically the causal relation obtaining between the electron and the nucleus around which it moves, or in the context of the movement of the electrons, it has

been opined that such a relation does not exist in Nature and, therefore, there is indeterminacy prevailing everywhere. This theory has introduced itself into other fields of knowledges also, such as ethics, morality and sociology. But this conclusion need not necessarily be correct, because the incapacity to observe the causal relation obtaining in the realm of sub-atomic particles can easily be due to the interference of the instrument of observation on the path of the movement of the electron.

There is a magnetic influence exerted by the position of the observing instrument upon the object that is observed, and due to the fact that the object is disturbed it appears to move in an erratic manner. Remove the instrument, and then observe the electron; but, if we remove the instrument, we cannot observe the particle. With the instrument we cannot know the truth; without the instrument we cannot observe anything. This is the fate of the scientific technique, and these methods which are scientific have also been adopted by the logical systems of philosophy, so that modern philosophy which is highly logical can also be regarded as scientific in the sense that it bodily incorporates into its system the methods employed in modern physics, and, therefore, it, also, cannot avoid the defects involved in scientific observation. Whatever is the defect of sensory observation through a telescope or a microscope is also the defect of observation through an intellect or the rational principle, because, though there is a great difference between a physical instrument such as a microscope and a psychological instrument such as the intellect, there is something

common between the two, viz., both are instruments of perception, and the defects involved in the instruments are similar, since the defect is due to the fact that the instrument is not placed in an organic relationship with the object of observation, and simultaneously, the observer also has committed the error of standing apart in space and time from the object of observation. So, neither through scientific methods nor through the logical systems of philosophy can ultimate truth be realised.

We are told by Masters that the only method, if at all we can call it a method, of contacting the Absolute, is a non-mediate procedure which is sometimes called the method of intuition, which is the way by which the observing principle enters into the vital essence of the object observed by a communion which is integral. This is the Yoga technique, truly speaking. The method of Yoga is, thus, different from the methods of physical science and intellectual philosophy, precisely because of the fact that the Absolute is not an object of observation through the senses. We cannot visualise it by a telescope or a microscope, nor can we understand it through the intellect, because the intellect is a psychological instrument which works in terms of space, time and cause, which are the limiting factors, the determining features which prevent the entry of the intellect into the vital constitution of the Absolute which is the goal of Yoga, and which, in the end, we are aiming at even through philosophy and science.

For this intuitive grasp of the Supreme Reality

which is the aim of Yoga, the Bhagavadgita gives us a novel technique. The Bhagavadgita is scientific and logical no doubt, but it is something more than being merely scientific and logical. It is scientific in the sense that it is methodical in its procedure, systematic in its approach, comprehensive in its grasp of things. It is logical because conclusions follow one after another in a series as a corollary following from a theorem. In these senses, we may say that the gospel is intensely scientific and immensely logical. It is a science and an art; it is a philosophy, but it is something different and more than all these things. It is *Brahmavidya*. It is *Yoga-Shastra*. It is *Krishna-Arjuna-Samvada*.

As the colophon of each chapter tells us: *"brahmavidyayam yogashastre sri krishnarjuna-samvade"*, it is a Brahmavidya, the science of the Supreme Reality. It is a Yoga-Shastra, the art and the science of the technique of contacting the Absolute. It is a practical methodology. It is also a description of the nature of the union of the individual with the Absolute, the glorious consummation that is the Krishna-Arjuna-Samvada, the meeting of the soul and the Supreme Reality, where the *Jiva* confronts *Ishvara*. Man faces God, and the relative enters the bosom of the All. Arjuna is the individual, Krishna is the Absolute, and the two converse with each other. This conversation between the Supreme Krishna and the individual Arjuna is a non-historical and super-temporal fact. This is the essence of the practice of Yoga, by which that which is within communes itself with that which is without, the Soul that is Universal.

This art which is the Yoga of the Bhagavadgita is described in eighteen chapters, right from the Arjuna-Vishada-Yoga, the first one, up to the concluding one, Moksha-Sannyasa-Yoga, the renunciation which leads to the liberation of the spirit. These eighteen chapters are a graduated process of the ascent of the soul to the realisation of the Absolute. The first chapter itself is highly significant, and is a Yoga by itself. It is a Vishada-Yoga or the Yoga of the sorrow of the seeker. One may wonder how sorrow can be called a Yoga. But this sorrow which is the first chapter, the first step in the practice of Yoga, is different from the sorrow consequent upon ordinary bereavements in human society. When someone near and dear dies, people are in sorrow, they are in grief. But this sorrow, which is described in the first chapter of the Bhagavadgita is of a different type altogether. It is sometimes called in mystic language, 'the dark night of the soul', a phrase coined by St. John of the Cross. The dark night of the seeking spirit is different from the dark night of ignorance in which most people are sunk. It is a condition, a pre-condition of the higher ascents in Yoga which follow and come after the preparations which the seeker makes for the purpose of the practice. Arjuna was not a foolish person. He was not a coward. He was not incapacitated in any manner. He could face the Lord Siva himself and win his grace through intense 'tapas'. How can anyone say that he was an idiot who could not understand things? Even such a hero could be in a state of sorrow when he began to confront facts. And this sorrow is a spiritual condition of inward

search, not the melancholy mood of a psychological complex.

We have to understand the difference between the ordinary griefs of mankind and the sorrow that is described as the part of the Yoga of the Bhagavadgita. This sorrow is a highly elevated state. It is not the usual drooping condition of an involved soul. It is a step that the soul takes above the ordinary phenomenon of *Samasra,* or the phenomenal life of the world. But the first step is the beginning of Yoga. When we withdraw ourselves from contact with the externals, we are actually supposed to be in the first chapter of the Bhagavadgita. The withdrawal, the 'pratyahara' as it is called, does not immediately take us to the consciousness of true Yoga. There is a darkness immediately precedent to the higher ascent that will follow afterwards.

The knowledge that we have in this world is sensory, and even intellectual or rational knowledge is sensory, ultimately, because it is a refined form of sensory perceptions, and, so, there is a gulf of difference in quality between spiritual perception or intuition and sensory contact which we call knowledge in ordinary language. When we withdraw all the faculties of sense and intellect, there is an absence of ordinary knowledge. The vision of the world ceases. One cannot see an object in front of oneself. When the senses are drawn away, weaned from the objects which are their counterparts, naturally there cannot be any perception. The senses are brought back from the objects; and, then, how can the senses conceive or perceive objects?

There is no seeing of anything. Everything is darkness. This darkness which is the outcome of withdrawal from objects of sense-contact is a very advanced state which is immediately precedent to the condition described in the second chapter of the Gita, where God himself comes, as it were, and takes us by the hand and leads us along the higher regions. The first chapter of the Bhagavadgita is, thus, a necessary state in Yoga, though it is called *Vishada-Yoga,* or the Yoga of grief. It is the condition in which the soul that is seeking finds itself when it has withdrawn itself from external contacts and severs relation with outer phenomena. There is, then, the commencement of a new type of interpretation of values, wherein situated, the soul begins to visualise everything in the context of the relation of everything to the total and not in its localised capacity.

The difference between the kind of knowledge with which one interprets things in this stage and the knowledge we have ordinarily today is this: while we look at an object or visualise anything, when we see a person or judge things, we forget the relationship of that person, that object or thing with the whole to which everything really belongs. We always commit the mistake of individual judgment, isolated valuation, as 'this person is good, or bad', 'this, or that is beautiful, or ugly', and so on. This is a wrong judgment, no doubt, because it is not possible for us, as individual, isolated observers to read the context of the relevance which that object has in its internal connection with the total to which it belongs. Thus, all judgments are erroneous,

ultimately. There cannot be a really correct judgment if the judgment is made by an isolated individual and the object also is an isolated something. In the state of Yoga, the way of evaluation changes. Everything is judged from the universal point of view.

The vision of the Absolute really commences from the first chapter of the Gita, though it is just an initial indication of this grand vision. Gradually, there is an increase in the intensity of perception, and this intensity is described in various ways through the verses of the different chapters of the Bhagavadgita, until we are taken to the conclusion of the sixth chapter, where there is a complete overhauling of the individual personality, and a highly concentrated state is reached by the individual. That concentrated condition in which the individual focusses itself for the purpose of the task on hand is the *Dhyana-Yoga* of the sixth chapter, wherein fixed we are an integrated personality and not a dissipated individual.

But even the sixth chapter is not the complete Yoga. It is only the completion of the integration of the personality, necessary for the higher ascent, which commences from the seventh chapter, wherein, like Hanuman flying across the ocean to Lanka, the individual attempts to cross the sea of existence and enter the ocean of the Absolute. The individuality, which is the characteristic of the observing individual, gradually loses its essence and begins to harmonise itself with the Universal, right from the seventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita. While the

individual is described in the first six chapters, the Universal is the theme of the next six chapetrs; and it is not enough if we merely describe or outwardly try to visualise the Universal. There has to be a union of the individual with All-Being. This is the purpose of the last six chapters. The integration of the individual, the visualisation of the Universal, and the union of the individual with the Universal Being are the stages of the Yoga of the Bhagavadgita. We reach the cosummation of it in the last chapter, called *Moksha-Sannyasa*, the renunciation of every character of individuality in the liberation of the spirit, which is the riding together of Arjuna and Krishna in the single chariot of the cosmos, which is the quintessence of the meaning of the last verse:

Yatra yogesvarah krishno yatra partho dhanur-dharah;
Tatra srir vijayo bhutir dhruva-nitir matir mama.

When the Arjuna that is the purified integrated individual is seated in the same chariot as that of Sri Krishna, the Supreme Absolute, then there is assured peace, prosperity, victory, plenty and justice everywhere. This is the justice of *'satya'* and *'rita'* proclaimed in the Vedas. The gospel of the Bhagavadgita is the gospel of Yoga, which is at once cosmic, individual, social, political and everything related to life. This Yoga is for everyone, for you and for me, and every person in every stage, and hence this Yoga which is the interpretation of the individual in terms of the higher values of life and the judging of every lower stage in terms of the

higher, is to be the ethical, legal and social standard of human life. The principle of the Bhagavadgita-Yoga is, therefore, that one should live in the awareness of the Supreme Reality, and conduct oneself in life, whatever be one's stage, in the light of this awareness of the higher realms of being.



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